

IN SEARCH OF CULTURALLY SUSTAINING MUSIC PEDAGOGY:  
ADOLESCENT MUSIC STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SINGING AND MUSIC  
TEACHING

by

Emily Good Perkins

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Harold Abeles, Sponsor  
Professor Jeanne Goffi-Fynn

Approved by the Committee on the Degree of Doctor of Education

Date 16 May 2018

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in  
Teachers College, Columbia University

2018

## ABSTRACT

### IN SEARCH OF CULTURALLY SUSTAINING MUSIC PEDAGOGY: ADOLESCENT MUSIC STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SINGING AND MUSIC TEACHING

Emily Good Perkins

The diversity present within K-12 classrooms in the United States presents teachers with students from many backgrounds and musical traditions. Traditional undergraduate music education programs which prioritize the Western canon provide little opportunity for students to address diversity, both in pedagogy and in content. Prospective music teachers in the choral or general music areas experience vocal education that focuses primarily on the classical *bel canto* vocal technique. This education fails to prepare teachers to teach students from diverse backgrounds and musical traditions. Because music plays an important role in adolescents' identity formation, teachers who are unprepared to recognize and teach diverse vocal styles may unknowingly alienate or silence their students.

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how two groups of music students, in early adolescence, and from a diverse urban public school, perceive the

singing and the music teaching in their general music classrooms. By discovering their perspectives, I hoped to shed light on the ways in which music teaching influenced their musical, vocal, and cultural identities, particularly during the malleable time of adolescence.

Over the course of three months, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 students and two teachers as well as twice-weekly classroom observations. Three research questions informed the data collection process: (1) How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background? (2) How do they describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class? (3) How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher?

The interview data and field notes from the observations were coded, organized, and analyzed into the following categories: (1) Music and Self Expression; (2) Music and Family; (3) Culturally Congruent and Incongruent Teaching; (4) Student Vocal Profiles; (5) If They Could Teach the Music Class, How Would They Teach? The overarching conclusion from this study is that the congruence or incongruence of a teacher's musical epistemology — “the norms, logic, values, and way of knowing” music (Domínguez, 2017, p. 233) — along with the musical epistemologies of her students was the primary factor for student exclusion or empowerment in the classroom.

© Copyright Emily Good Perkins 2018

All Rights Reserved

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful husband, John, my beautiful children Lili and Noah and my loving parents, Howard and Gloria. I am truly grateful for your unceasing love, support, and encouragement during the entire process. This certainly would not have been possible without you.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The dissertation journey, one in which I was personally transformed, was meaningful only because of those who contributed to the process and to whom I want to express my deepest gratitude

Dr. Hal Abeles, my mentor, advisor, and teacher, thank you for your unfailing support, encouragement, and guidance during this entire process. I have learned so much from you about being a patient, kind, open, understanding, and empowering teacher. I appreciate the ways in which you have encouraged me to remain true to myself and in doing so empowered me to be confident in who I am. As an educator, I believe you truly embody the spirit of Teachers College and inspire us all to be compassionate, open, understanding, humble and advocates for justice. Thank you for your mentorship, your humor and your support. I hope that we will have many more opportunities to collaborate in the future.

Dr. Jeanne Goffi-Fynn, my mentor, teacher, and in many ways someone who I feel is a kindred spirit, I am truly grateful for everything you have done for me on this journey. It was because of you, that I was able to find my singing voice and singing spirit again for which I will be forever grateful. I am extremely grateful for all the ways in which you mentored, guided, and empowered me and the many spirited and passionate discussions we had about singing, motherhood, academia and education. Thank you for lifting me up, encouraging me and believing in me during the ups and downs of the dissertation process. I truly admire your unceasing compassion and passion for your

teaching, your students and your research. You inspire me to be the best educator, singer, researcher, and mother that I can be. I look forward to many more collaborations and discussions in the future.

Dr. Randall Allsup, my mentor, teacher and friend, it was because of you that I sought this journey at Teachers College. Your work inspired me to pursue my passion for social justice and education. You never cease to amaze me with your insight and care for those who are forgotten by the system. I thank you for your unceasing commitment to justice within our field, and the ways in which you continue to inspire my work. I am deeply grateful that I had the opportunity to take your course in China and the ways in which it transformed and impacted me.

Dr. Lori Custodero, I am extremely grateful that I had the opportunity to work with you and wish I had had more time in your classroom. The passion and compassion you demonstrate for your students, research, teaching and mentoring are infectious. I am truly grateful for the ways in which you mentored and taught me and opened my eyes to new research avenues I never knew I would be passionate about. Thank you for your encouragement and support. You provide inspiration for me as I venture into the next phase of my life.

Dr. Marie Volpe, I am truly grateful for the ways in which your mentorship and teaching helped to direct my research, clarify my path, and instill confidence in me when I needed it the most. Your deep commitment to me—to all of your students—and your unceasing support is remarkable and inspirational. You inspire me to be the best researcher and educator within my potential. Thank you for your compassion, honesty, and wisdom. I will be forever grateful.

To Billy and Kimberly, soon-to-be Dr. Billy and Dr. Kimberly, I am so grateful that I have shared this path with you. You were there to lift me up, inspire me, laugh with me, encourage me, listen to me, and cry with me. Thank you for your friendship and love. I could not have navigated the sometimes uncertain and seemingly impossible road without you. I will forever cherish you.

To my AUS students, Anas, Rayan, Sawsan, Abdulrahman, Odiel, Rim, Fadi, Mohammad G, Mohammad A., Nagham, Meera, Razan, Alawi, Murad, Maisoon, Rashed and Bahar, to name a few, it was because of you and the ways you inspired and impacted my life that I decided to pursue this degree. Thank you for teaching me so much more than I ever could have taught you. I will always cherish the memories of our time together, and you will forever be in my heart.

To the students in my study, your stories and insight deeply inspired and moved me and forever changed me. I am deeply honored to share your stories, and I strive to do so with great humility. Your voices remain a part of me as an educator and researcher as I continue my work in equity and justice.

Finally, I am blessed to have a wonderful and loving family without whom this would not have been possible. To my loving and supportive husband and life partner, John, whose unconditional support and belief in my abilities helped me through the most difficult times. Thank you for always believing in me, lifting me up, cheering for me and celebrating with me. I am so grateful for your partnership, friendship and love. I know that our path together will always be bright, creative and exciting. My two beautiful children, Lili and Noah who are my joy and inspiration and the sunshine in my life. I love you with all of my heart. Thank you for joyfully traveling across the world, living in



New York City in the summers, flying to conferences and concerts and being lovingly and amazingly by my side. I cherish every moment with you and am so extremely grateful for you. To my parents, thank you for all your love, support and encouragement. You have been the best parents anyone could possibly ask for. I am extremely blessed and grateful. I am deeply grateful for the ways in which you have modeled justice, peace, humility, kindness, and love throughout my entire life and how you have inspired and continue to inspire my life's journey. To my three loving brothers, their three beautiful partners and children: Andrew, Kelly, Nick, Michelle, Chris, Stacy, Benjamin and baby-to-be, I am so grateful for you, your love, your support, your encouragement, and humor throughout this entire process. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. To my parents-in-law, Burroughs and Marilyn for your unceasing support and love throughout this process and for believing in me and cheering for me and taking an interest in my sometimes overly-detailed research. Thank you for all your love, care, prayers and support. For Maggie, Todd, Gem, Arden and Corinna, thank you for lifting me up, encouraging me and supporting John, Noah, Lili and me throughout this long and hectic journey. I will be forever grateful and feel extremely blessed to have such wonderful family. This would not have been possible without each one of you.

E. G. P.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I – INTRODUCTION .....	1
Narrative .....	2
Problem .....	4
Purpose.....	4
Research Questions .....	4
Background .....	6
Method .....	11
Chapter Organization .....	12
II – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	13
Introduction.....	13
The Evolution of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy .....	14
Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies .....	19
<i>Bel canto</i> Vocal Technique and White Bourgeois Culture.....	21
<i>Bel Canto</i> Technique and American Music Education.....	23
Where Are We Today? .....	26
Identity .....	31
Vocal Identity.....	32
Musical and Ethnic Identity Development .....	33
Musical Identity Development.....	34
Ethnic Identity Development .....	35
Shaw (2014) and Joyce (2003) .....	38
Summary .....	41
III – METHODOLOGY .....	44
Introduction.....	44
Design and Instrumentation .....	44
Pilot Study.....	45
Pilot Study Participants.....	46
Pilot Study Data Collection .....	46
Pilot Study Findings.....	47
Pilot Study Findings: James’s Musical/Vocal Identity.....	48
Pilot Study Findings: Matthew’s Musical/Vocal Identity .....	49
Pilot Study Findings: Ethnic Identity.....	50
Pilot Study Findings: School Music Instruction .....	51
Pilot Study to Current Study .....	52
“Purposeful Sampling” Criteria .....	54
Participants and Setting.....	55
Procedures .....	57
Data Analysis .....	60

IV – FINDINGS.....	62
What is Music for These Students? .....	63
Self-expression and Identity .....	64
Music and Family .....	65
“A Tale of Two Classrooms”.....	69
Culturally Incongruent Classroom.....	69
A Typical Day in Ms. Greene’s Class .....	72
Precious.....	72
Tamila.....	73
Alma.....	73
Isabella.....	73
Lori.....	73
Destiny.....	74
Mercy.....	74
Matt.....	74
Sarah.....	75
Strict Discipline and Classroom Management.....	75
Discipline Over Relevance, a Downward Spiral .....	76
Strict Vocal Approach - Western Classical Style .....	78
Culturally Congruent Classroom .....	81
A Typical Day in Ms. Miller’s Class .....	83
Student Profiles from Ms. Miller’s Class .....	85
Aisha.....	85
Kesha.....	86
Davion.....	86
Jayla.....	86
Luis.....	87
Curriculum .....	87
Description of Vocal Teaching .....	89
Vocal Profiles.....	90
Ms. Miller’s Class.....	90
Ms. Greene’s Class .....	92
If They Could Teach the Music Class, How Would They Teach? .....	94
Students Value Cultural Plurality .....	94
Students Value Autonomy .....	96
Students Value the Opportunity to Express Themselves.....	97
Encouragement Over Discipline .....	97
More Singing (Low and Fast) .....	98
Summary .....	100
V – REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS .....	101
VI – DISCUSSION.....	104
Musical Epistemology .....	105
Incongruent Musical Epistemology .....	106
Coloniality.....	106
Method Without Reflection .....	110

Cultural Nobility and Racialized Bodies .....	113
Musical Entrainment and Musical Epistemology .....	116
RQ 1: How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background? .....	117
RQ 2: How do they describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class? .....	117
RQ 3: How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher? .....	119
The Singing Body .....	120
Classroom Management.....	126
Congruent Musical Epistemology.....	129
The Paradox of Classroom Management.....	130
Linguistic Appropriateness .....	132
Tenets of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy.....	133
Access and Critique .....	134
Culture Sustains .....	135
Ritual.....	136
Beyond a Eurocentric Framework .....	137
Decolonization, Dismantling .....	139
An <i>Itinerant</i> Approach to Music Education.....	142
Epistemic Travel .....	143
 VII – SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	145
Summary .....	145
Conclusions: Answering the Research Questions.....	148
Research Question #1: How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background?.....	149
Holistic Music .....	149
Afrocentrism and Indigenous Epistemologies .....	150
Research Question #2: How do students describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class?.....	152
Culturally Incongruent Classroom.....	152
Culturally Congruent Classroom .....	155
The Norm Rather Than the Exception.....	158
Research Question #3: How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher? .....	159
Culturally Plural Music Classroom.....	159
Recommendations .....	161
Music Teacher Education .....	162
Practical Suggestions .....	162
Future Directions .....	165
Recommendations for Research .....	167
 VIII – FINAL REFLECTION .....	169
My Personal Journey.....	169
 REFERENCES .....	172

## APPENDICES

Appendix A Individual Student Interview Protocol .....	179
Appendix B Informed Consent Form .....	181
Appendix C Assent Form for Minors .....	184

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Data Collection Outline .....	58

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Conceptual framework: Cycle of exclusion .....	5
2	Pilot study student artwork: James . ....	53
3	Pilot study student artwork: Matthew .....	54

## I – INTRODUCTION

The changing demographics in the United States are particularly evident in the K-12 population. According to the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (NCES, 2017), the percentage of white students in the 2017-2018 school year is less than 50% of the total student population and, “is projected to continue to decline through at least fall 2026.” Latino, Asian, and Pacific Islander populations are growing while the population of white students is decreasing. The changing demographics are not, however, equally distributed throughout rural, suburban, and urban areas. White students account for 71% of the population in rural public schools, whereas they make up 30% of the population in urban schools (NCES, 2013). The rapidly changing climate of public schools necessitates critical attention and awareness of the diverse needs of diverse students.

Part of this awareness is the recognition that student demographics are not reflected in teacher demographics: “In the 2011–12 school year, about 82% of all public school teachers were non-Hispanic White” (NCES, 2013). In city schools, where 70% of the student population is non-white, 71% of all teachers were white (NCES, 2011-12; NCES, 2013). Teacher demographics are similar within music education. During the 2014-2015 academic year, 84.9% of postsecondary music faculty were white (NASM, 2015). The stark contrast between the demographics of teachers and students within urban K-12 schools and the lack of diversity represented by music faculty require an



analysis of the practices and pedagogies to ensure cultural awareness and relevant teaching.

According to the National Association of Schools of Music [NASM] (NASM, 2015), 9.8% of undergraduate music majors (Bachelor of Music) were Hispanic, 6.8% were African American, 4.4% were Asian and .5% were Native American. The lack of diversity within undergraduate music programs requires an analysis of music teacher education practices as well as the ways in which these practices manifest in K-12 music classrooms. Are K-12 music experiences relevant for diverse student populations? Scholars who challenge the current state of postsecondary music education (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012; Benedict, 2009; Bradley, 2015; Gould, 2012; Hess, 2015; Koza, 2008), suggest that the prioritization of the Western canon is exclusive and quickly becoming irrelevant for many K-12 students. In addition, the pedagogies with which the Western canon is associated, employed in school music classrooms, have the potential to be culturally biased. My research focuses on the pedagogies and practices within postsecondary applied vocal instruction and the ways in which they can facilitate or debilitate students' ability for culturally relevant teaching.

### **Narrative**

I first began to reflect on the practices and pedagogies of postsecondary vocal instruction when I, as a newly hired vocal instructor, struggled to provide culturally relevant vocal teaching for my students. I was hired to teach Applied Voice at American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. Most of my students were Arab, and none had any experience with Western classical music or Western classical vocal technique. My applied vocal training in my undergraduate and graduate programs was

solely from the *bel canto* vocal tradition. Although I was a performance major, all music education and performance majors studied the same technique. Confronted with a new culture and specific cultural aesthetics, I quickly became aware of my narrow and exclusive perspective. I asked myself, why should these students learn classical vocal technique when it provides no meaning and relevance for them? In addition, why is it that I believe that classical vocal technique is the only healthy way to sing? How is it that I have never been exposed to alternative timbres and ways of approaching the voice that are equally valuable? This process of self-reflection and analysis of, “default settings” (Regelski, 2013) allowed me to re-imagine what vocal teaching *could be* and possibly *should be*.

The dramatic contrast between Arabic singing technique and Western classical technique forced me to recognize my prejudices against all “non-classical” singing styles. If I had not encountered a teaching experience in which the students’ cultures were unfamiliar to me, I may never have been forced to re-think my approach. As a person who grew up in a family committed to social justice, it is remarkable that I never questioned the ideology behind my educational experiences which provided the foundation for my own teaching. If I had insisted that my Arab students learn Western classical vocal technique, how different would this have been from colonialism? Instead, I yearned to see the world through my students’ eyes. This experience allowed me to join my world-view with my musical world-view by simply decentralizing the Western canon. Although, I knew very little about singing and teaching within alternative paradigms, I began to question my ideology of my postsecondary music experience and broaden my perspectives.

## **Problem**

The diversity present within K-12 classrooms in the United States presents teachers with students from many backgrounds and musical traditions. Traditional undergraduate music education programs which prioritize the Western canon provide little opportunity for students to address diversity, both in pedagogy and in content. Prospective music teachers in the choral or general music areas experience vocal education that focuses primarily on the classical *bel canto* vocal technique. This education fails to prepare teachers to teach students from diverse backgrounds and musical traditions. Because music plays an important role in adolescents' identity formation, teachers who are unprepared to recognize and teach diverse vocal styles may unknowingly alienate or silence their students.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how two groups of adolescent music students from a diverse urban public school perceive the singing and the music teaching in their general music classrooms.

## **Research Questions**

To shed light on the purpose of this study, I addressed the following research questions:

1. How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background?
2. How do they describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class?
3. How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher?

The perpetuation of exclusion within music education is visually represented in Figure 1. Undergraduate vocal education which prioritizes the *bel canto* vocal tradition fails to prepare music education majors for diverse vocal teaching. Upon entering the K-12 classroom, music education majors teach the way in which they themselves were taught during their undergraduate education. The prioritization of the *bel canto* vocal tradition provides meaning for K-12 students who are familiar with this tradition. However, students who relate to other musical cultures may be musically excluded. The cycle repeats itself when children with diverse musical backgrounds are denied access to undergraduate music programs.

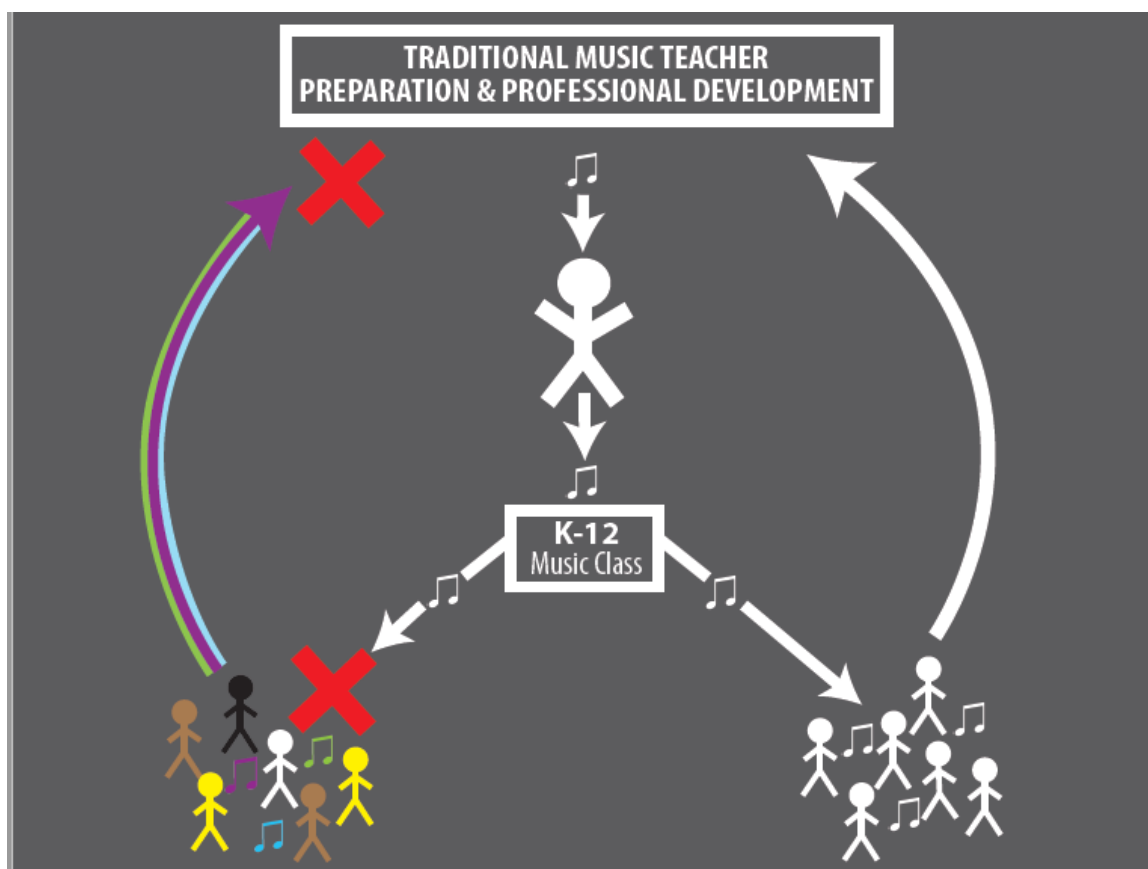


Figure 1. Conceptual framework: Cycle of exclusion

## Background

The multiplicity of cultures represented within American schools is a reality that music teachers must address. Postsecondary music education should equip and empower music educators with tools for culturally relevant teaching. *Culturally relevant pedagogy*, proposed by Ladson-Billings (1995) 20 years ago, encouraged discussions on race, culture, and social justice in education. Many scholars have further defined and analyzed Ladson-Billings' theory (Gay, 2002, Paris 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

According to Ladson-Billings, this century's version of culturally relevant pedagogy must address the needs of today and the students who continue to be marginalized: "Our pedagogies must evolve to address the complexities of social inequalities" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 77). She advocates the transition to *culturally sustaining pedagogy* as proposed by Paris (2012). Ladson-Billings states that this approach, "pushes us to consider the global identities that are emerging in the arts . . . toward a hybridity, fluidity, and complexity never before considered in schools and classrooms" (2014, p. 82).

Research on culturally relevant and responsive music education has shown barriers which impede teachers' success (Bradley, 2006; Joyce, 2003; Lind & McKoy; 2016; Rohan, 2011; Shaw, 2014). The prioritization of the Western canon as a foundation for music education excludes and silences certain voices for whom this is not relevant (Joyce, 2003). This silencing has negative implications for both the student and the field of music education. Because music plays an important role in adolescents' identities (Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves, 2002), music instruction which fails to recognize adolescents' musical culture has the ability to negatively impact their identity

formation. Students who encounter incongruent musical experiences are more likely to believe that they lack musical ability (Joyce, 2003).

The lack of diversity amongst undergraduate music educators and the Eurocentric paradigm that continues to shape music education in the United States perpetuate the cycle of exclusion. Music educators who advocate for culturally relevant and responsive teaching recognize this cycle and offer possibilities for change. Two particular studies examined the ways in which music education has the power to exclude and include, specifically within the realm of choral and vocal education (Joyce, 2003; Shaw, 2014).

Using a multiple embedded case study design, Shaw (2014) studied the application of culturally responsive pedagogy with three choirs from an urban children's choir organization. She was particularly interested in the students' perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy. In addition, she explored the relationship between the students' cultural and musical identities and the ways in which culturally responsive pedagogy bridges gaps between home and school cultures. Shaw discovered that the culturally responsive instruction fostered, what Gay (2002) has called, "pedagogical bridges" (p. 113) between the students' school life and family life. This in turn helped to strengthen the students' cultural identities and encourage familial involvement (Shaw, 2014).

The teachers embraced the choir's diversity and approached it as an asset (Shaw, 2014). Each teacher responded to the unique culture of her choir and encouraged a wide range of choral sounds. Students learned multiple vocal styles, were able to imitate different vocal timbres and recognized different performance practices. In addition, the students recognized that different repertoire and cultures necessitated different

approaches. This approach to vocal instruction provided students with a technique that was flexible and adaptable. In addition, by encouraging a flexible vocal approach, the teacher demonstrated the value of diverse vocal styles. This is counter to traditional norms in which music educators often favor the *bel canto* vocal technique. Interestingly, Shaw observed that the only instance in which singers felt inadequate or labeled themselves as non-musicians was when the *bel canto* technique was favored.

Vocal self-identification and the influence of culture on vocal identity was a theme that emerged from Shaw's (2014) research. When discussing vocal models, students looked to popular singers and family members. In addition, Shaw noted commonalities between students' chosen vocal models and the students' own ethnicity. In this instance, the students' vocal identities were interlinked with their cultural identities. Therefore, Shaw suggests that the validation of different vocal styles encourages rather than silences the students' voices and in turn strengthens their identities.

While Shaw (2014) studied adolescents and the positive impact of culturally responsive pedagogy on their identity formation, Joyce (2003) studied adults who, as children or adolescents, had been silenced from singing. The purpose of her study was to discover the ways in which they were excluded. Joyce found that North American music educators mostly prioritize the Western canon and a narrow definition of "good" or "proper" singing. A theme that emerged in her research was a binary between "good" and "bad" singing. Teachers who demonstrated the "wrong" way of singing inadvertently devalued certain vocal sounds which may have had meaning for some. Joyce emphasizes the array of vocal sounds and colors with which different cultures

identify. Much like Shaw (2014), she argues that the favoring of one vocal sound over the myriad of others not only silences the individual but also the individual's culture and community.

The perceived neutrality of music education in North America is problematic (Joyce, 2003). The Western canon, which forms the foundation for North American music education, is culturally specific. The "normalization" of this tradition and philosophy that it can be applied to all music creates a hierarchical approach and perpetuates, "White bourgeois" culture (Joyce, 2003, p. 153). This idea of bourgeois culture, where one dominant musical paradigm supersedes all other music, creates what Joyce describes as the, "non-singing" or, "inhibited" subject.

The notion that proper singing is subjective and that the voice is capable of multiple sounds leads Joyce (2003) to reject vocal education in its current state. Much of vocal music training in North American higher education uses the *bel canto* or classical vocal technique as the foundation for choral and vocal teaching. The inclusion of other vocal techniques in music education offers the possibility to nurture voices which may fall outside of the narrow confines of the *bel canto* style. In addition to the recognition of multiple vocal colors and styles, Joyce encourages voice teachers to criticize accepted practices that perpetuate the dominant versus subordinate relationship within music education. Culturally responsive pedagogy aims to liberate and include by giving a voice to students' cultures. Therefore, teachers who employ culturally responsive vocal pedagogy should encourage vocal sounds both within and outside of the Western paradigm. In doing this, teachers will provide meaning and depth for their students.



In response to the gap in literature on gospel vocal pedagogy, Robinson-Martin (2010) used, “educational design research” (van den Akker, Gravemeijer, McKenney, & Nieveen, 2006) to develop a handbook on gospel vocal pedagogy. Robinson-Martin’s extensive research and detailed process resulted in a noteworthy contribution to vocal pedagogy literature (2017), as well as the diversification of the field of vocal education. Similar research for approaches to Chicano, Arabic, Native-American, Chinese-American, and Indian-American (among many others) singing styles would help to broaden the field of vocal education. The incorporation of multiple singing styles and pedagogies into undergraduate vocal education would enable students to be culturally relevant in their teaching. In addition, the analysis of multiple vocal pedagogies and discussion about differing perspectives would allow room for students to critically engage in the learning process. The lack of a “one size fits all” approach to vocal pedagogy encourages students to develop their own teaching voice and to challenge unquestioned assumptions. This student-centered approach in the applied studio is more likely to produce teachers who are able to approach diversity with student-centered, inclusive philosophies.

The growing diversity in American public schools provides K-12 educators opportunities to engage with and embrace cultural diversity. The exploration of diversity within music classrooms is beneficial to all learners and helps to broaden their perspectives. American students identify with multiple cultures of origin and reference, they combine elements from multiple sources to form their identities. The fluidity of culture, particularly within the American public-school system requires music educators to be flexible and open. Music education which privileges the Western classical tradition

provides little space for the exploration of multiple relevant and meaningful musical cultures. The decentralization of the Western paradigm allows for multiple centers. Classical music can be one of the many cultures and pedagogies explored in K-12 music, rather than the center to which all “other” musics are compared. This model which allows for multiple centers has the potential to uplift all students and positively affect all students’ identities.

## **Method**

To discover the ways in which adolescent students in general music classrooms perceive their vocal and music teaching, I used a qualitative case study method. According to Creswell (2013), “a case study is chosen to study a case with clear boundaries” (p. 123). The *case* in this study was a diverse, public K-8 school located in a large Midwestern city in the United States. My research took place in two general music classrooms—one fifth grade and one sixth grade—with the two teachers and their students. Between the two teachers in my study, they taught all of the general music students in this school. Therefore, by examining each teacher’s classroom culture, I could ascertain the specificities of the general music teaching at this school. This school was chosen based upon the students’ ethnic diversity and socioeconomic backgrounds—more specifically, children of color from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the most marginalized in our society. The primary focus of this study was to discover the children’s perspectives with semi-structured interviews. Classroom observations and detailed field notes were taken to garner an in-depth understanding of the classroom culture. In addition, teacher interviews were conducted as a means of triangulation with observations and student interviews. In addition to being bound by “place,” the school,

this case study was bound by “time.” The data collection took place over the course of three months.

### **Chapter Organization**

In Chapter II, the review of the literature includes an analysis of the evolution of Ladson-Billings’ (1995) theory of *culturally relevant pedagogy* and the subsequent expansion of Paris’ (2012) conception of *culturally sustaining pedagogy*. Subsection 2 and subsection 3 are based upon findings from Joyce’s (2003) and Shaw’s (2014) studies: (a) *bel canto* vocal technique and white bourgeois culture; and (b) The intersectionality of ethnic, musical, and vocal identities. The final subsection provides a more thorough analysis of Shaw’s and Joyce’s studies. In Chapter III, the methodological design, I describe the participants and setting, as well as the data collection and analysis procedures. I present the findings from the interviews and observations in a narrative format in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, I reflect upon the research process and provide a brief introduction to the final two chapters. I begin Chapter VI by introducing the overarching theme that emerged from this study and provide a subsequent discussion. The discussion in Chapter VI includes literature from Chapter II, findings from Chapter IV, as well as new literature that became relevant once I conducted the study and analyzed the data. In Chapter VII, I provide a summary of the study, answers to the research questions, recommendations for practice and research. In my final Chapter, Chapter VIII, I reflect upon my dissertation journey.

## II – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

The findings from Shaw's (2014) study indicate that culturally relevant music education positively influences adolescents' identities. She found students' cultural, musical, and vocal identities to be intertwined. The only instance in which students' identities were negatively impacted was when the *bel canto* technique was favored. Similarly, Joyce (2003) studied adults, who as children or adolescents had been silenced from singing. Much like Shaw, she found that a *bel canto* vocal approach with a narrow definition of "good" and "bad" singing was the culprit. Joyce and Shaw's findings provide a juxtaposition of the ways in which vocal education can empower or disempower. Viewed through the lens of *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (Paris, 2012), the following literature review expands upon themes from Joyce's and Shaw's studies to further explore the impact of vocal education.

The first subsection provides an overview of the evolution of *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995) to *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (Paris, 2012). The following two subsections are based upon two main themes from Joyce's and Shaw's studies. From Joyce's study, the relationship between white bourgeois culture and the *bel canto* singing technique will be further explored in the second subsection. From Shaw's study, the third subsection is focused on adolescent identity development and the intersection of ethnic, musical, and vocal identities. The final subsection provides further detail about Shaw's (2014) and Joyce's (2003) research.

## **The Evolution of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

In response to the *deficit approaches* in educating African American students, Ladson-Billings proposed *culturally relevant pedagogy* (1995), an approach which honored rather than denied students' cultural identities. Ladson-Billings recognized the need for reforms within teacher education to better prepare teachers for socially just and equitable teaching. Her study of successful teachers of African American students provided a foundation for her theory. Ladson-Billings observed that these teachers used different strategies to achieve success. Her deduction of commonalities amongst these teachers provided the theoretical underpinnings for culturally relevant pedagogy. The successful teachers helped their students become, “academically successful, culturally competent, and socio-politically critical” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 477).

*Academic success* refers to the student's intellectual growth in response to the teacher's instruction and approach (Ladson-Billings, 2014). *Cultural competence* describes the student's awareness and appreciation of her culture of origin while simultaneously learning about other cultures. *Socio-political consciousness* refers to the student's ability to critically analyze social and political systems and policies. Ladson-Billings' three tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy provided a theoretical foundation for researchers in educational justice.

Influenced by Ladson-Billings' theory, Gay (2000) proposed five elements of *culturally responsive teaching* as a pedagogy for pre-service education programs. She recognized that teacher education programs were advocating for multicultural education but failing to provide their students with the necessary skills to succeed. According to Gay, educational research typically separates theory, practice, and research; however, she

chose to combine the three to best contribute to the field (Gay, 2000). Much like Ladson-Billings, Gay used the experiences and stories of teachers working with underserved African, Latino, Asian and Native American students as data (Gay, 2002). In addition, her other data sources consisted of research and theory pertaining to multicultural education. Gay used data from multiple disciplines including: K-12 teachers, university professors, sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists. Her in-depth compilation of multiple sources of data from varying fields and disciplines informed her research on culturally responsive pedagogy. She defined culturally responsive teaching as, “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p. 106). The five elements include: becoming knowledgeable about cultural diversity, including culturally diverse content in the curriculum, “demonstrating caring and building learning communities, communicating with ethnically diverse students, and responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction” (p. 106).

The first element which recognizes the need for teachers to become knowledgeable about cultural diversity is partitioned into three subsections (Gay, 2002). The first subsection describes the teacher’s awareness of cultural characteristics and contributions of diverse ethnic groups. Teachers must recognize the underpinning values and traditions, as well as communication styles of different cultures. This awareness can help teachers to better understand and educate students from different cultural backgrounds. The second subsection emphasizes the need for an in-depth understanding of diverse cultures. She argues that cultural awareness without adequate detail is not sufficient for culturally responsive teaching. A detailed understanding helps to combat

the media's distorted or false portrayals of specific cultural groups. In the third subsection, Gay emphasizes that acquiring the knowledge necessary for culturally responsive teaching is not as difficult as one might assume. She encourages teachers to pursue and discover an in-depth understanding about cultural diversity.

The second element of culturally responsive teaching focuses on the addition of culturally responsive curriculum (Gay, 2002). Gay describes three forms of curriculum and the ways in which they provide opportunities for culturally responsive teaching.

*Formal curriculum* refers to standards and policy within educational systems. Textbooks and curriculum guidelines fall into this category. The culturally responsive teacher must critically evaluate how these materials depict cultural diversity. Gay calls for teachers to recognize and revise curriculum that perpetuates the marginalization of ethnic groups.

*Symbolic curriculum* encompasses images and symbols used in education. Bulletin board displays, decorations and images of people are examples of symbolic curriculum. The inclusion and exclusion of symbols and people on display have an impact on what is perceived to be valuable. Culturally responsive teachers use symbolic curriculum to convey values about cultural diversity. *Societal curriculum* includes the perceptions and knowledge about ethnic groups as portrayed in the media. Oftentimes, this portrayal of ethnic diversity is inaccurate and distorted. Through culturally responsive teaching, Gay encourages teachers to recognize the media's influence and provide students with alternative views. In addition, culturally responsive teachers must teach their students to be, "discerning consumers of and resisters to ethnic information disseminated through the societal curriculum" (p. 109).

The third element emphasizes the need for a classroom environment in which ethnically diverse students feel comfortable (Gay, 2002). Through cultural sensitivity and caring, teachers can build learning communities in which their students can excel. Culturally responsive teachers connect academic knowledge with cultural awareness and political activism. Teachers help their students recognize moral and political implications of knowledge. They encourage their students to critically examine issues which are pertinent and meaningful.

The fourth element Gay (2002) addresses is cross-cultural communication. The recognition of varied communication styles present in different cultures is imperative for good communication between teachers and students. Teachers who are fearful of overgeneralizing may ignore the influence of culture on behavior; however, Gay encourages teachers to confront and embrace cultural differences. Teachers who understand their students' communication styles are better equipped to determine their abilities and needs.

The fifth and final element of culturally responsive teaching deals with the method of instruction (Gay, 2002). Gay states that, "culture is deeply embedded in any teaching; therefore, teaching ethnically diverse students has to be *multiculturalized*" (p. 112). Culturally responsive instruction provides "pedagogical bridges" (p. 113) for students to connect prior knowledge to new knowledge. Teachers who immerse themselves in their students' cultures are best able to instruct in culturally congruent ways. According to Gay, teaching in a culturally responsive way is a skill that must be encouraged and nurtured in teacher preparation programs.



Gay, among others, developed and furthered Ladson-Billings' theory into new forms and interpretations. Ladson-Billings (2014) states, "my work on culturally relevant pedagogy has taken on a life of its own, and what I see in the literature and sometimes in practice is totally unrecognizable to me" (p. 82). Due to this lack of recognition, 20 years after the development of her theory, *culturally relevant pedagogy*, Ladson-Billings (2014) calls for a "remix" (p. 76). She recognizes the important influence her 1995 theory had on research pertaining to culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy and the many paths which diverged from her initial three tenets. However, because of the fluidity of scholarship and the dynamic nature of culture, Ladson-Billings believes a remix is necessary.

The approach for which Ladson-Billings advocates was developed by Paris (2012) in response to a changing society. Paris argued that the terms *relevant* and *responsive* do not adequately address the needs of a pluralistic society. These terms refer to the way in which a student's culture is used to teach him the dominant culture. Paris proposed *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (CSP) as an alternative. CSP aims to perpetuate and encourage cultural plurality. This pedagogical stance is strongly supportive of students' cultures rather than merely responsive or relevant. CSP seeks to sustain culture both in a traditional and evolving way according to students' lived experiences by, "support[ing] young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (p. 95). Paris introduced the term and stance *culturally sustaining pedagogy* as a means for future research and advocacy in the pursuance of educational justice.

## Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

Paris and Alim's 2017 compilation of scholarship on culturally sustaining pedagogies expands Paris' 2012 discussion to include a variety of critical viewpoints. In their, "loving critique" (p. 4) of asset pedagogies, Paris and Alim call for a radical departure from neo-liberal approaches to educational equity. They emphasize the need for a stance where students', "funds of knowledge" (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006) are recognized and valued unto themselves and not merely as a means to teach the dominant epistemology. This conception is in direct opposition to normative educational practices because it requires a heterogenous approach to culture, language and pedagogy: "By proposing schooling as a site for sustaining the cultural ways of being of communities of color rather than eradicating them, CSP is responding to the many ways that schools continue to function as part of the colonial project" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2).

Similarly, Domínguez (2017), who extends Paris' conception of cultural sustenance to cultural sustenance and revitalization, emphasizes the need for a decolonization of teacher education, where teachers engage in, "epistemic travel" (p. 225) as a means of disrupting harmful dominant discourses and closing the, "ontological distance" that alienates teachers from students. He states:

Colonization as an explicit *de jure* system of political domination has ended, yes. Yet bans on ethnic studies, the proliferation of reductive curricula, disproportionate suspension/expulsion rates for youth of color, the prevalence of the school-to-prison pipeline, increasing levels of school segregation, legislation and policymaking that target and privatize schools in communities of color, police brutality in and out of schools, and so many other policies, concerns, indignities, and assaults on agency, culture, language, and identity persist. These are the accruing injuries of coloniality. (p. 227)

The, “assaults on agency, culture, language, and identity” about which Domínguez speaks is further articulated by Bucholtz, Casillas, and Lee (2017) in their discussion about language agency. They assert that, “one of the most important yet most devalued resources available to youth of color is their language” (p. 44). For Paris and Alim (2017), the recognition of linguistic plurality in educational settings is a crucial component of CSP. Language agency is further examined by Rosa and Flores (2017) from a, “critical raciolinguistic perspective” (p. 186). In their discussion about discourses of, “appropriateness,” they argue for a dismantling of the linguistic hierarchy that continues to marginalize students of color. Educators who enact CSP allow for and value the linguistic practices of their students. They do so by actively working to disrupt, “linguistic purity” discourses (p. 185).

The linguistic and cultural heritage of students of color is at the center of CSP. In her discussion about intergenerational cultural practices, Lee (2017) expands the discussion about, “emergent” and, “heritage” (Domínguez, 2017, p. 233) cultural practices within CSP. One of the tenets of CSP is that culture is fluid, and changeable and students’ cultural practices should not be essentialized. However, within the emergent forms of culture, both Lee and Paris emphasize the importance of recognizing heritage practices. Lee (2017) calls them a, “repository of historically intergenerational cultural practices” (p. 266). It is the simultaneous recognition of both heritage and emergent cultural practices in a non-binary and non-essentializing way that allows for students’ cultural identities to flourish. This, however, according to Lee, is also the, “dilemma” without a, “simple resolution” but, “is a necessary first step” (p. 268). She states that, “as we think about what should be sustained and why, we must realize that

there are always competing demands around what is historically transmitted as tradition, and new practices and allegiances that are often hybrid and emergent” (p. 268). Despite the dilemma, the recognition of students’ cultures both in traditional and evolving ways is an important step towards culturally sustaining and revitalizing education.

The aspects of CSP on which Paris and Alim (2017) and the contributing scholars focused—cultural plurality, coloniality in education, discourses of “appropriateness,” linguistic and cultural competence, and emergent and historical practices—are all applicable to music education and will be further explored throughout this document. Specifically, for vocal educators, students’ singing cultures are intimately tied to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The prioritization of the *bel canto* singing tradition allows little room for students’ cultural, linguistic, and vocal competence. In the following subsection, I examine the ways in which the *bel canto* singing technique has been historically tied to coloniality and bourgeois culture and the implications for music education today.

### ***Bel canto* Vocal Technique and White Bourgeois Culture**

What do Nguni people find beautiful in their music if a person is singing with a screaming voice? If I am listening with a Haydn or Mozart ear the intonation is out, *the tone is out*, but if I am listening with an *isicathamiya* ear this is expressive. (Bongani Mthethwa, as quoted in Olwage, 2004, p. 217)

Joyce’s (2003) study illuminated the repercussions of culturally *irrelevant* music education. One theme that emerged was the impact of an exclusive, “white bourgeois” (p. 153) approach to singing and a binary between “good” and “bad” singing. The advent of a bourgeois singing technique can be traced back to Victorian Britain and the rise of the middle class (Potter, 2006). This new style of singing was initiated by Garcia’s *Traité complet de l’art du chant* (1847). His treatise, which addressed laryngeal position

as well as diaphragmatic breathing, marked the beginning of the *bel canto* vocal technique and the operatic voice as we know it today.

It is only in the nineteenth century that the artistic use of the voice acquired the technique which would finally separate it completely from every other way of singing. The modification of aristocratic conventions by the new bourgeoisie ensured that the concept of ‘classical singing’ and the circumstances in which it was consumed maintained a tradition of separateness from other musics. (Potter, 2006, pp. 63-64)

*Bel canto* vocal technique became an exclusive approach to singing and listening. Those with “refined” tastes were able to distinguish between a “good” *bel canto* sound and a “bad” other. These elite tastes were not only associated with upward mobility, but, “the embourgeoisement of the singing voice brought the idea of othered voices into play” (Olwage, 2004, p. 206).

Olwage (2004) traces the historical connection between *bel canto* singing and colonialism. In 19th-century Britain, vocal pedagogy was referred to as, “voice culture, where culture in the 19th century was synonymous with civilization” (p. 207). The “othering” of singing voices justified the use of vocal teaching to “civilize” and refine those who were not a part of white bourgeois culture for the betterment of society. This manifested both in Britain proper with the working classes as well as part of Britain’s colonialist mission in Africa: “Voice culture provided the opportunity for re-forming the voice, for colonizing yet more of the other’s body. And, at least ideally, it was conceived as part of the programme to civilize black South Africans” (p. 208). Hegemonic vocal culture was rooted in Victorian Britain. The “harsh” timbre of the African voice and the “rough” grain of the working-class song provided the opportunity for seemingly innocent domination. The singing voice, intimately linked to a person’s identity and culture and

oftentimes a person's only means of self-expression became the vehicle for, "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 1982, as cited in Potter, 2006, p. 190).

Symbolic violence is a, "gentle, invisible" form of coercion by which dominant classes enforce hegemony through the operation of institutions in which people 'collaborate in the destruction of their instruments of expression' (Bourdieu, 1982, as cited in Potter, 2006, p. 191). Although Bourdieu is not specifically addressing the singing instrument, the ways in which he discusses language purification in 19th-century French schools is similar to the singing culture in Britain. In the effort to "unify" society, the French bourgeois encouraged, "linguistic unification" (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, p. 47). Working class French citizens who used other dialects were forced to abandon their linguistic identities. The "refined" French language was imposed and much-like Britain, hegemony was apparent as citizens took part, "in the destruction of their instruments of expression" (p. 49). Bourdieu and Potter (2006) show how 19th-century French and British bourgeois society appropriated the voices of the marginalized under the guise of "refinement" and a more "cultured" society.

### ***Bel Canto* Technique and American Music Education**

Much like Britain and France, 19th-century music education in the United States focused on refining the child: "Public school vocal instruction promised to distinguish bona fide citizens from those who, a priori, lacked the requisites for liberty" (Gustafson, 2009, p. 3). The *bel canto* singing tradition became the distinct white sound to which other "unrefined" singing was compared. In the early 20th century, psychoacoustics allowed music educators to analyze and compare different singing styles. The racialization of the singing voice was justified through the "objectivity" of science.

*Bel canto*'s ties to processes of exclusion in public school music teaching and postsecondary education lie in its authority to judge and rank comportment, diction, ornament, and register, among other qualities as musical values. (Gustafson, p. 128)

The use of the *bel canto* singing technique as a means to “civilize” both a person’s voice and a person’s ear did not end in the 20th century. The specificity and complexity of the *bel canto* technique allows for a narrow and exclusive definition of “correct” singing.

Stark (2003) describes *bel canto* singing to be the, “art of the few and not of the many” (p. xxi):

Such singing requires a highly refined use of the laryngeal, respiratory, and articulatory muscles in order to produce special qualities of timbre, evenness of scale and register, [and] breath control. This kind of singing requires a different vocal technique than ‘natural’ or untrained singing. (p. xxi)

Stark describes the complexity of this vocal approach and the specific sound one attempts to achieve. *Bel canto* technique allows a singer to optimize resonance and therefore projection. This technique is invaluable for operatic and solo concert performers.

However, to learn the intricacies of *bel canto* technique, a singer must develop an acute awareness of a specific vocal timbre. This specific tone becomes the singer’s status quo. Therefore, *bel canto* technique is not merely a study of vocal production, it is also a prioritization of a specific vocal sound.

Those who are able to recognize a “good” sound are said to have a “good ear” (Gustafson, 2009). Undergraduate music education allows students in both performance and education to develop and fine-tune skills in listening and singing. The ways in which pitch and timbre are defined by the Western classical tradition, frame the sound for which music educators strive: “This skill set is hyper-developed in the professional, classically trained musician” (Gustafson, 2009, p. 147) and informs the way in which singing is

assessed. Gustafson notes that, “while ear training itself is not a significant aspect of the public school curriculum . . . [it is] an integral part of the school music teacher’s ‘tool bag’ with which she plans her lessons and evaluates students” (p. 147). Similarly, general music teachers in K-12 classrooms may not necessarily teach the nuances of *bel canto* technique; however, the ways in which they assess singing as “good” or “bad” are inadvertently informed by their postsecondary vocal training.

Much like Gustafson (2009) and Stark (2003), Olwage (2004) recognizes the ways in which the aurality of the *bel canto* technique manifested in colonialist Africa: “Teachers monitoring singers were instructed to be on the alert for the chest register and the associated use of too loud and harsh a voice” (p. 216). African vocal sound, listened to with *bel canto* ears sounded, “savage.” Vocal colonialism, in essence, took place both with the voice and the ear: “It is in what we prefer to hear that the voice is fashioned. So, instead of the colour of the voice, we might speak about the colour of the ear” (p. 217). The discussion about *bel canto* aurality from different perspectives (Gustafson, Olwage, Stark), emphasizes the specificity and exclusivity of a *bel canto* sound. It requires that we look more closely at the *bel canto* vocal training in our music universities. Does this technique hinder K-12 music educators’ ability to affirm and recognize diverse vocal tones? Are music teachers with “trained” voices and “trained” ears inhibiting the success of America’s diverse student population? Hegemonic oppression is volatile because the marginalized are made to believe in the, “destruction of their instruments of expression” (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, p. 49). If K-12 students’, “instruments of expression” sound foreign to K-12 music teachers, is *bel canto* vocal teaching contributing to a form of “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1982, as cited in Potter 2006, p. 191).



### Where Are We Today?

“Listening for Whiteness” is the provocative title of Koza’s (2008) article in which she peers into the undergraduate vocal audition process. She describes the narrow criteria, based upon *bel canto* principles, which is used to admit or reject students.

The repertoire requirements are forthright in their specificity about what will or will not be valued, and my university makes no pretense of welcoming diverse musical genres, styles, or experiences. (p. 148)

The repertoire considered to be acceptable is from the Western art song tradition. The ways in which the repertoire is judged—appropriate style, tone quality, attention to the score, pitch accuracy—are deeply rooted in the *bel canto* vocal tradition. In addition, the audition process is the same for students who are interested in vocal performance or music education. The students who are being excluded from music education programs are the ones who possess musical talents outside of the narrow audition criteria. These students have the ability to provide rich musical experiences for K-12 schools; however, university training is “the only available pipeline to K-12 music teaching” (p. 152). By broadening the audition criteria, students with diverse backgrounds will have more opportunity to access music education.

The National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), an organization that has traditionally solely focused on *bel canto* technique, has recognized the need for diverse approaches to voice teaching. The 2015 NATS summer workshop focused on the teaching of gospel, rock, and musical theater techniques in addition to *bel canto* technique ([www.nats.org](http://www.nats.org)). In addition, NATS has published a series called “So You Want to Sing” (Hall, 2014). These books include an overview on teaching jazz, musical theater, gospel, and rock singing styles. In his article entitled “Why I Don’t Teach

Belting,” McCoy (2013), an esteemed classical voice teacher and pedagogue, recognizes the need for the diversification of the profession. Despite his admission that he lacks the ability to teach styles outside of the classical vocal realm, he states,

It is time to acknowledge that the world has changed, and that our curricula must be adapted to suit the needs and expectations of the real world, which includes skill in teaching both classical and CCM [contemporary commercial music] genres and techniques. (p. 182)

Robinson-Martin (2010; 2017), one of the presenters at the NATS 2015 summer workshop, developed a gospel vocal pedagogy handbook to address the specific aesthetics and vocal technique for gospel singing. One of the experts used in Robinson-Martin’s study, LoVetri (2013) defines contemporary commercial music (CCM) as the styles which used to be labeled “non-classical.” According to LoVetri, these styles include musical theater, pop, jazz, gospel, rock, blues, rap, country, folk, and alternative, amongst others. To teach CCM styles, LoVetri has developed a pedagogy for performers. She argues that classical *bel canto* technique is not a “one size fits all” pedagogy. Instead, she offers her pedagogy as one that can be adapted to all singing styles. She claims that this pedagogy is objective and founded on the basic principles of vocal function.

Functional training puts all students on a level playing field, as it regards the process of training for singing as a muscular one that involves learning sophisticated vocal and physical behavior over time. As that behavior becomes habit, the artist within is free to create vocal music that suits the person, her choice of music, and her unique way of expressing it. She is free to learn the conventions of any given style, era, composer, or form. (LoVetri, 2013, p. 81)

Much like LoVetri, Winnie (2014) focused on the diversification of vocal training. He was particularly interested in the public school choral experience. The growing diversity within public schools as well as the increased interest in performing

multi-cultural and CCM repertoire motivated Winnie to develop a new approach to vocal pedagogy. He prioritized authenticity and “healthy” vocal production throughout his research. By combining prior research and vocal teaching methods, Winnie developed an approach to teaching contemporary vocal technique (CVT) within the choral rehearsal. He combined *bel canto* principles with CCM styles to produce a “holistic” approach. The *bel canto* concepts of breath, onset and resonance provide the foundation for his technique. Winnie argues that a completely new pedagogy for teaching diverse styles is not necessary. Instead, he aims to broaden the current understanding of vocal teaching.

It is my belief that *bel canto*’s main tenets promote healthy singing and have been proven successful through scholarly research and evidence. In the twenty-first century vocalists should be encouraged to become more versatile in their technique and to perform diverse genres. This only further propagates the necessity to understand the basic foundational elements to all healthy singing incorporated within the *bel canto* tenets: breath, onset, and resonance. (Winnie, 2014, p. 27)

The following overview will provide a brief description of the *bel canto* principles of breathing, onset, and resonance, as addressed by Winnie. Diaphragmatic breathing, in which the diaphragm descends and displaces the viscera, combined with intercostal breathing which expands the ribcage is the breathing approach most often associated with *bel canto* technique (Winnie, 2014). This allows the singer to maximize her breath potential. *Appoggio* in *bel canto* technique refers to the struggle between the muscles of inspiration and the muscles of expiration. This struggle allows for a balance between subglottic pressure and phonation. *Appoggio* is required in order to have a balanced onset. A balanced onset refers to the simultaneous adduction (closing) of the vocal chords with expiration. In addition to a balanced onset, *bel canto* technique uses balanced resonance. This resonance is often referred to as *chiaroscuro*, the balance of

light and dark, which is considered to be a pure tone. The modification of vowels creates the balanced resonance and allows for an optimal projection of sound.

An understanding of CCM approaches to breathing, onset and resonance allows for a juxtaposition of CCM ideals with *bel canto* principles (Winnie, 2014). According to Winnie, there are various approaches to breathing for singing within CCM styles. Some CCM teachers believe that breathing is instinctual and that too much of an emphasis on “proper” breathing technique can cause students to develop tension. In addition, many CCM teachers advocate against over-breathing. With regards to onset, aspirate and glottal onsets are used along with the balanced onset throughout CCM styles. CCM styles utilize resonances from one end of the spectrum to the other. Oftentimes, projection is not emphasized as it is in *bel canto* technique. Winnie argues that breath, onset, and resonance are important principles of all healthy singing; therefore, he uses these three tenets to connect classical and contemporary singing styles.

By synthesizing existing research on vocal pedagogy, Winnie (2014) developed an approach for teaching diverse singing styles within the choral classroom. His approach used the traditional choral warm-up, individual instruction, breathing exercises, speech and vowel instruction, varied onsets, and resonance awareness. Very few studies have suggested ways in which vocal pedagogy can be changed to be more inclusive. Winnie’s synthesis is valuable because it addresses the current gap in vocal education. However, throughout Winnie’s study, the “other” singing styles are examined and explained based upon *bel canto* ideals. He is clear that his approach is rooted in the *bel canto* tradition as he addresses different vocal ideals outside of the Western tradition. However, throughout his proposed exercises and examples, he refers to “ideal” vowels,

resonance, and onsets. He demonstrates that other styles can be achieved by subtly varying *bel canto* technique which implies that *bel canto* technique is ideal. The Western paradigm continues to be the central priority.

Both LoVetri (2013) and Winnie (2014) recognize the need for a new approach to vocal pedagogy—one that is more inclusive and relevant. However, *bel canto* principles continue to be the central underpinnings from which other styles are approached. The definition of CCM, although no longer considered “non-classical,” encompasses all vocal styles except classical singing. The deduction of culturally rich and varying vocal styles into one category appears to be an additive approach (Hess, 2013). In addition, throughout Winnie’s research, “healthy” singing is a recurring theme. He assumes that *bel canto* singing is the healthiest approach; however, he never defines, “healthy singing” nor does he provide evidence for this assumption.

Becker and Goffi-Fynn (2016), on the other hand, provide an explicit description of the ways in which vocal training can attend to both the student’s cultural and musical identities as well as the development of her vocal instrument. In doing so, students are empowered to become agents of their own singing instruments as well as “musical leaders and collaborators” (Becker & Goffi-Fynn, 2016, p. 10). Becker and Goffi-Fynn’s holistic approach provides student-centered ways in which to practically address vocal technique and rehearsal pedagogy equitably and with the student’s best interest in mind. In doing so, they focus on the ways in which the tenets of classical vocal training, specifically “registration, resonance and breath management,” can be applied in ways that are meaningful for their students to encourage “healthy, flexible vocal technique” (p. 10). Their contribution to the field demonstrates that vocal education need not be a binary

between *bel canto* or non-*bel canto* singing but rather one in which a student is empowered to attend to her cultural, musical and vocal identities while realizing her vocal potential.

## Identity

The voice assumes its identity, its sonic and therefore social identity, from the aesthetics of musical pleasure in which it is embedded. We know what a pleasing voice sounds like and we try, consciously or not, to reproduce it; we do not usually *try* to sound unpleasant. (Olwage, 2004, p. 216)

To achieve the timbral aesthetics of *bel canto* singing, a singer must conform her individual timbral inclinations. A person's timbral inclinations are influenced by biological and cultural factors (Welch, 2005). Timbral influences begin in the womb when a baby is biologically and aurally affected by her mother's voice. Before birth, a child has already begun to develop a, "bias" (p. 11) for the musical aesthetics of her culture. By age seven, a child has begun to negotiate and develop a musical identity (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002, p. 14) in conjunction with other facets of her identity. Cultural and musical inclinations coalesce and influence a child's ethnic identity formation.

Hargreaves et al. (2002) have stressed that, "Social constructionist theories suggest that people have many identities, each of which is created in interaction with other people" (p. 10). Particularly for children who come from a minoritized group, the negotiation of ethnicity and identity during adolescence plays an important role in the child's well-being. Within a Eurocentric school system, identity formation is more difficult for minoritized adolescents. As a marginalized student, they are forced to confront their ethnicity in terms of dominant white society whereas, Phinney (1989) found that, "white students, even in settings where they were in the minority, did not

show evidence of these stages and were frequently unaware of their own ethnicity apart from being American” (p. 45).

Adolescence can be described as a tumultuous time during which a child is confronted by multiple biological and physical changes. According to Miranda (2013), “music can influence key aspects of adolescent development” (p. 10). As seen in Shaw’s (2014) study, culturally congruent music instruction positively affected adolescents’ identity. Fitzpatrick (2012) distinguishes the nuances associated with culturally relevant teaching. She asserts that the addition of repertoire or the acknowledgement of a cultural tradition is not culturally relevant teaching. Rather, it is in the, “interactions, discussions, questions, dialogue, and explicit and *tacit foci of our pedagogy*” (p. 57, emphasis added). Fitzpatrick’s distinction between pedagogy and repertoire mirrors Paris’ (2012) emphasis on *sustaining* the cultures of American students. The nuances and implicit values communicated through vocal teaching have the power to include or exclude.

### **Vocal Identity**

Barring exceptional instances, the first sounds a fetus experiences within the womb are of its mother’s voice. (Welch, 2005).

The filtered interfacing of the maternal and fetal bloodstreams allow the fetus to experience the mother’s endocrine-related emotional state concurrently with her vocal pitch contours. Thus, the child enters the world with an emotional ‘bias’ towards certain sounds, linked to their earliest acoustic and affective experiences of maternal vocal pitch contour. (pp. 10-11)

The mother’s specific vocal sound influences the fetus both sonically and hormonally.

During the third trimester, the further development of the fetus’s endocrine, nervous and immune systems allows for the fetus to distinguish, “affective states” (Dawson, 1994, as

cited in Welch, 2005, p. 10). From within the womb, the fetus begins to favor its mother's vocal timbre.

These “preferences” for particular vocal pitch contours, vocal timbres . . . linked to underlying endocrine and emotional states, may also be seen as early examples of how musical experience (including singing) is multiply processed within the overall functions of the nervous, endocrine and immune systems. (p. 13)

“Communicative musicality,” a theory introduced by Malloch (2000) to explain the vocal communication between baby and mother, distinguishes three specific elements: pulse; quality, which includes timbre; and narrative (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). Culturally specific vocal sounds are expressed by the mother, first to the fetus in utero and then to the infant. Babies are born already predisposed to their mothers' vocality (Malloch, & Trevarthen, 2009; Welch, 2005). This bias is further solidified during the baby's first year of life. By the time an infant is one year old, she is able to distinguish between familiar and foreign vocal sounds.

The acoustic features of the maternal voice and her immediate sonic environment are socially and culturally located, such that the initial generic plasticity demonstrated by the neonate for the discrimination of differences in any group of sounds (Eimas et al, 1971, as cited in Welch) is soon shaped towards a biased detection of the particular distinguishing features of salient local sounds. (Welch, 2005, p. 12)

The complexity of fetal/infant vocal predisposition and its connection to adolescent timbral preferences is the starting point from which adolescent vocal identity can be discussed. A child's timbral preferences are culturally conditioned, biologically manifested, and emotionally experienced.

### **Musical and Ethnic Identity Development**

Hargreaves et al. (2002) approach the discussion of musical identity development from a socio-cultural perspective and through the lens of social constructionist theories:



“One of the primary social functions of music lies in establishing and developing an individual’s sense of identity, and that the concept of *musical identity* enables us to look at the widespread and varied interactions between music and the individual” (p. 5). A social-cultural perspective acknowledges that children’s musical identities are influenced both biologically and culturally from birth (Welch, 2005). Through a social constructionist lens, children’s identity formation is fluid, malleable and vulnerable. It is, “formed and developed continuously through conversation and interaction” (Hargreaves et al., 2002, p. 10). From these two theoretical perspectives, three components of children’s identity development which are important for the discussion of both musical and ethnic identity development can be derived: (1) Children are biologically predisposed to the music of their culture from birth; (2) Throughout childhood, children’s musical identities are shaped by their musical culture; (3) Children’s identity development is multi-faceted and fluid and is easily influenced both positively and negatively by teachers and peers. Therefore, “family and school contexts can . . . be crucially important for a child’s developing sense of self and particularly for their self-esteem” (p. 8).

### **Musical Identity Development**

Within the realm of musical identity development, Hargreaves et al. (2002) suggest two broad categories under which musical identities can be explained. The first is *identities in music* (IIM) (p. 2). IIM are influenced by the social and cultural definitions of music to which one is exposed. For example, Welch (2005) describes the story of a woman who was born in Barbados but who lived most of her life in the United States. Socially and culturally, she had come to believe that she was a non-singer in the

United States even though she considered herself a singer in Barbados. The social construction of acceptable and unacceptable singing voices is an example of how IIM are impacted by a person's cultural and social surroundings. The second category, *music in identities* (MII) (p. 2) refers to the ways in which children use music as part of their identity formation. When they encounter culturally congruent musical experiences, their identity development is positively impacted; whereas, musical experiences that are not congruent with their musical culture, as seen with the Barbados singer's identity, can hinder identity development.

A social constructionist approach to adolescent identity development recognizes that children have multiple identities which they must negotiate and mediate to develop a positive self-identity. For children of color, the negotiation of their ethnic identity is crucial to developing a positive collective identity. According to Phinney (1989), the salience of ethnicity for children of color is not experienced by white children even in settings when they are not the majority. Minoritized children are confronted with ethnicity throughout adolescence. As they negotiate the ways in which they fit into white dominant culture, culturally congruent academic and social experiences can positively affect their identity development. Ethnic and musical identities intersect during adolescence. A child's musical identity development is rooted in her ethnicity and affected by musical experiences which confront her musical culture. Her ethnic identity development is affected by the ways in which her musical culture is received.

### **Ethnic Identity Development**

According to Phinney (1989), "the failure of minority adolescents to deal with their ethnicity could have negative implications, such as poor self-image or a sense of

alienation” (p. 38-39). Phinney’s model for adolescent ethnic identity development as well as literature on adolescent identity formation (Hargreaves et al., 2002; Miranda, 2013) can illuminate the ways in which musical and ethnic identities converge.

In an effort to develop and test a model for ethnic identity development, Phinney (1989) synthesized existing literature on ethnic identity. From the literature, he derived a model with four stages of ethnic identity development:

1. *Diffusion*: Little or no exploration of one’s ethnicity.
2. *Foreclosure*: Little or no exploration of ethnicity, but apparent clarity about one’s own ethnicity.
3. *Moratorium*: Evidence of exploration accompanied by some confusion about the meaning of one’s own ethnicity.
4. *Achieved*: Evidence of exploration, accompanied by a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of one’s own ethnicity. (Phinney, 1989, p. 38)

To determine the accuracy of this model, Phinney (1989) conducted in-depth interviews and administered questionnaires with 91 tenth graders from urban schools.

Demographically, the group of students was diverse and included Asian-American, African-American, Latino, and white American students. All of the students had been born in the United States. From the model, specific characteristics of each stage were used as a means for coding the data.

Results from the minoritized students provided empirical evidence for a three-stage model of ethnic identity development. Results from the white students were impossible to code. According to Phinney (1989), “ethnicity was not an identity issue to which they could relate” (p. 41). The data from the three minoritized groups, however,

provided evidence of similarities between these groups. These findings are important because prior to Phinney's study, other studies on ethnic identity development had focused on one ethnicity. The results from the three minoritized groups indicated that the distinction between stage one and stage two was unclear. Fifty percent of students from these three groups were in the *diffusion* and *foreclosure* stages. Twenty-five percent were in the *moratorium* stage, and 25% were in the *achieved* stage. Based upon this study, Phinney adapted his four-stage model to a three-stage model:

1. *Diffusion/Foreclosure*
2. *Moratorium*
3. *Achieved*

The first stage, which consists of *diffusion and foreclosure*, (Phinney, 1989) can begin as early as seven years old (Hargreaves et al., 2002, p. 14) as a child begins the process of identity development. During this stage, "individuals have taken on without question the values and attitudes to which they have been exposed" (Phinney, 1989, p. 36-37). Within school culture, children are exposed to the cultural beliefs and practices of white American society. For children from backgrounds whose cultures are not equally present in school curriculum, their lack of representation negatively impacts their identity development. This is particularly salient because this first stage is one in which children are susceptible to school and societal ideology. Oftentimes, they will even, "[internalize] negative views of their own group that are held by the majority" (p. 36).

The second stage is characterized by a time of exploration. Children begin to explore and question their ethnic identity. In order for children to develop a healthy identity, they need to be able to accept their ethnic identity. This is particularly difficult

when their school culture is dominated by white society. The lack of presence of their own culture sends implicit messages that they are not valued. Therefore, within this school environment it is difficult for minoritized children to reach the final stage which is, “acceptance and internalization of one’s ethnicity” (Phinney, 1989, p. 38).

### **Shaw (2014) and Joyce (2003)**

Using a multiple embedded case study design, Shaw (2014) studied choral students’ perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy. The three choirs in Shaw’s study were located in contrasting settings (North, South and West) of a large Midwestern city and provided varied demographics. The North Side choir was demographically heterogeneous while the South Side choir was demographically homogenous. Three students and one teacher from each location participated in the study. The student participants’ ethnic identities were as follows: Puerto Rican; Guatemalan; African American; Filipino-Irish-Persian-Puerto Rican-Baha’i; Korean American, Mexican-Puerto Rican. In addition, the three teacher participants were ethnically diverse, in various stages of their teaching careers, and had varying experiences working with cultural diversity.

Data collection (Shaw, 2014) took place over the course of 14 weeks. Shaw generated detailed field notes from observations of rehearsals and performances totaling 18.25 hours. Her field notes focused on the students’ reactions to the teachers’ method of teaching. However, she also audio recorded and transcribed each rehearsal, which allowed for analysis of the teacher’s instruction as well. To discover the students’ perceptions of culturally responsive teaching as well as details about the students’ identities, Shaw conducted five student interviews with each choir. These interviews

consisted of two group interviews, one individual interview and two artifact-elicited interviews. The artifact-elicited interviews were meant to show commonalities and differences between the students' and the teacher's views on musical identity and culturally responsive teaching. The first artifact-elicited interview used recordings of vocal models as a prompt for conversation. The second used printed concert programs and performance videos. The student interviews took place without the teacher and each one lasted 30 minutes. All of the student interviews were audio recorded. In addition to the five semi-structured interviews with students, Shaw documented informal conversations she had with students before and after rehearsals. Further data collection included three, 90-minute, semi-structured interviews with each teacher and the collection of material culture. This material culture included: lesson plans, teacher biographies, choir mission statements, registration materials, musical scores, audio and video recordings and concert programs.

Shaw discovered that the culturally responsive instruction fostered, "pedagogical bridges" (Gay, 2002, p. 113) between the students' school life and family life, strengthened the students' ethnic identities and encouraged more familial involvement (Shaw, 2014). One choir teacher invited family members to share their music and teach specific repertoire from their culture. This exchange facilitated communal integration as well as the students' sense of belonging within the choir. Students in Shaw's study who learned culturally relevant music found the experience to be meaningful.

The intersection of vocal and ethnic identities was a theme that emerged from Shaw's (2014) research. The students' ethnicity and family influenced their vocal preferences; therefore, the validation of different vocal styles encouraged rather than

silenced the students' voices and in turn strengthened their identities. This is a primary goal in culturally responsive pedagogy.

To privilege the Western classical style of singing as a dominant discourse may have implied that students' beloved family members' ways of singing were invalid. Rather than denigrating the singing styles emphasized in students' families, teachers opened possibilities for exploring multiple vocal styles, timbres, and techniques through CRP. (Shaw, 2014, p. 299)

The three choir teachers in Shaw's study demonstrated their vested interest in the culture of every singer. Each singer's ethnic identity influenced the collective culture of the choir both in repertoire and vocal style.

While Shaw (2014) studied adolescents and the ways in which culturally responsive pedagogy positively impacted their identity development, Joyce (2003) studied adults who as adolescents had been silenced from singing. The purpose of her study was to discover the ways in which they were excluded. Her primary sources of data consisted of observations and interviews in multiple settings and forms. She interviewed individuals who teach singing to adults outside of formal music education. These teachers employed various alternatives to vocal instruction. In addition, Joyce interviewed a small sample of self-identified, "non-singers" to glean insight into why they considered themselves non-singers. As a participant observer, Joyce gathered data from workshops for singers and symposiums in the field of adult vocal education. She also used her own experience as a song leader and facilitator of singing workshops as a data source. In addition, her personal narratives are interwoven throughout her study in response to her participants' accounts. She used her narratives as a means for interpreting and reflecting upon the experiences of her participants.

Joyce (2003) found that North American music educators mostly prioritize the *bel canto* technique, both in preferred aesthetics and teaching method. The binary between “good” and “bad” singing which emerged from her research was created because of the prioritization of one specific vocal style. According to Joyce, the normalization of this technique and vocal aesthetic creates a hierarchical approach and perpetuates, “White bourgeois” culture (p. 153). This idea of bourgeois culture, where one dominant musical paradigm supersedes all other music, creates what Joyce describes as the, “non-singing” or, “inhibited” subject.

Sound that comes out of our mouths is called singing (or not) depending on what discourses are informing our experience. Our identifications with singing will largely shape how we recognize that particular sound as singing (or not), and qualitatively as *good* singing or *bad* singing. Cultural differences affect how current discourses in a given context will shape beliefs about what constitutes singing. This is why people from one culture can frame an unfamiliar “foreign” version of singing as not singing at all, but some nasty noise. (p. 84)

### Summary

Culturally relevant *music* education has been addressed both theoretically and empirically (Fitzpatrick, 2012; Lind & McKoy, 2016; Shaw, 2014), although not nearly as extensively as it has been within the broader field of education. Within the literature on culturally relevant music teaching, however, there is little or no discussion on vocal pedagogy. Postsecondary music programs which provide, “the only available pipeline to K-12 music teaching” (Koza, 2008, p. 152) are focused on Western classical traditions, and vocally speaking, the classical *bel canto* vocal technique. While this technique is appropriate for performance majors, it is limiting for music education majors.



Historically, the *bel canto* technique has been linked to bourgeois society and used for hegemonic oppression. Today, undergraduate *bel canto* vocal teaching trains both a student's voice and her ear. To understand the specificities of the technique, singers become acutely aware of one distinct sound. This sound is considered to be optimal and it is the sound to which all other sounds are compared. Music educators in K-12 classrooms enter the classroom with preconceived vocal ideals, oftentimes unaware that their aural awareness is limited. This has negative implications for K-12 music students from diverse cultural backgrounds who biologically and culturally are inclined towards specific vocal sounds. Teachers who are unable to recognize diverse singing styles have the potential to negatively impact a student's self-esteem. Because the voice is intimately connected to a person's identity and culture, negative vocal experiences may have severe repercussions.

Adolescence is a time when children's self-esteem is extremely vulnerable. They are forced to confront multiple facets of their identities during a psychologically sensitive time. During this time, family and teachers play important roles in children's lives. Teachers who assist children in building "bridges" between their school and family positively impact a student's well-being. Because music plays a salient role in adolescents' identity development and because it is so intimately linked to culture, music teachers have a unique opportunity to foster cultural bridges. Music and the arts are crucial components for *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (Paris, 2012). Eurocentric curriculum and systemic inequalities continue to be realities that students of color must face. School singing experiences can provide an opportunity for children to express their

voices, each one a unique expression of his culture and upbringing. Rather than silence, these opportunities can empower.

### III – METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how two groups of adolescent music students from a diverse urban public school perceive the singing and the music teaching in their general music classrooms. To carry out the purpose of this study, I addressed the following research questions:

1. How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background?
2. How do they describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class?
3. How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher?

In this chapter, the methodology, research design, instrumentation, procedures, and plan for data collection and analysis are presented.

#### **Design and Instrumentation**

The design of this study was a partial replication of Shaw's 2014 study. Case study research, "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). The general music classroom was the context within which the phenomenon, adolescent students' perceptions of their vocal and music teaching, could be studied. The *case* in this study, "bounded by time and place" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97), was the K-8 school at which I collected data over the course of three months. My own, "detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of

information” allowed me to, “explore an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). The multiple sources of data collection which included interviews with students, interviews with teachers and fieldnote observations allowed for an in-depth exploration, as well as the triangulation of multiple data sources.

### **Pilot Study**

Prior to conducting this study, I conducted a pilot study for the purpose of evaluating and refining my methods. The purpose of my pilot study was to explore with two sixth grade students from an urban school their perceptions of singing and the vocal teaching to which they were exposed in their general music classrooms. The research questions that informed the interview process were the following:

1. How do students in urban public schools describe the vocal teaching in their general music class?
2. How do they describe their own singing and singing background?
3. In what ways has their experience in the music classroom influenced or changed their perceptions of singing?
4. What about the vocal music experience is encouraging or discouraging?

To discover the perceptions of two sixth-grade students, I used semi-structured individual interviews, a group interview with both participants and an art activity. I developed the interview protocol based upon my research questions and initial themes from the literature. The themes from the literature that informed the process were the following: (1) Cultural congruence and relevance or incongruence with music teaching; (2) Self-esteem as singer; (3) Vocal identity; and (4) Silencing or encouraging. From my four research questions, the five concepts which I hoped to explore in the interviews were as

follows: (1) Cultural and family background; (2) Vocal models and preferred vocal models; (3) Perception of vocal teaching—presence of diverse singing styles; (4) Feelings about vocal teaching; and (5) Feelings about own singing voice—self concept. Using my research questions and the five broad concepts, I developed interview questions for each category.

### **Pilot Study Participants**

James, an 11-year-old, and soon to be 12-year-old boy, lives with his mother, younger brother and nanny in an apartment in a large metropolitan city. His father lives in the same city with his father's parents. Both of James's parents work full time. His father is of Taiwanese descent and works as a doctor. His mom is of Korean descent and works as a lawyer. The second participant, Matthew, is an 11-year-old boy, as well. Matthew's mother is of Jewish descent and his father is Chinese-American. His mother works as an accountant. Matthew has two younger brothers and lives in the city with his mother, father and two brothers.

### **Pilot Study Data Collection**

I began the interview session with charades as a means of building rapport, as this was the only time we were meeting. They immediately took to this activity and it seemed to put them more at ease. Following charades, I conducted the group interview. Although charades had helped to build rapport between myself and the boys, they felt inhibited in front of each other during the group interview. After the group interview, I conducted the individual interviews. Both boys spoke openly during the individual interviews and were more at ease than in the group interview. When they were not being interviewed, I asked if they would be willing to make a picture of themselves singing (see

Figures 2 and 3). I provided a wide range of art and craft supplies and gave no further instructions. I was careful to not use specific terms. For example, I consciously did not use the word “draw,” and I intentionally provided a large variety of materials with hopes that they would choose the medium which felt most authentic for them.

### **Pilot Study Findings**

From the pilot study interviews, four large themes were similar for both interviews. For both boys, singing and their vocal identities were important. For James, this was a new facet of his identity that had emerged within the last year. For Matthew, singing had been important throughout his life. What they had in common, and the second theme, was that they both were negotiating their vocal identities outwardly, away from family. This negotiation created a binary, and the third theme, for both boys between family and self. For Matthew, the negotiation of his vocal identity outwards was not by choice but because his father, his singing role model, no longer sung to him and was working more. For James, his singing identity, in and of itself was separate from his family. James’s musical connection with his family was through classical piano music; therefore, singing popular music allowed him to explore his own musical tastes and newfound voice. The final overarching theme from both interviews concerned school music teaching. Both boys were able to specifically articulate what they wanted from their school music experience. Interestingly, their preferences, although different from each other, were in opposition to what they were currently experiencing in the music classroom.

### **Pilot Study Findings: James's Musical/Vocal Identity**

The binary between the music of others, which included: family, private music instruction and school music teaching, and his own music were extremely apparent in James's interview. Although he never expressed resentment, the musical experiences he encountered with "others" which included classical piano playing and performing seemed to be compulsory. Everything from repertoire choice to style of music were chosen for him by his family, private teacher and general music teacher. James' music, however, was in contrast with the formality of the "others'" music. He preferred informal, popular music, and singing, all of which he had started to explore in the last year with his friends. Singing had provided him with his own voice, and singing with friends, certain friends, was not inhibiting but exhilarating and fun. James said,

Now I'm a little more interested in music . . . since I started singing in class [free time] with my friend. . . I get a little nervous when I do something in front of a lot of people, but when I'm with my friends, I'm OK.

In addition to a newfound sense of self, James was also exploring the capabilities of his voice and felt excited about his abilities: "My voice can make a really good Batman impression."

James's identity was positively influenced by his vocal and musical exploration. Singing provided him an opportunity to bond with his peers, explore his individuality, and express emotions. The separation of James's parents was affecting him, and music provided an outlet for him to experience his feelings. He said, "other times, I like, you know, songs that make you like remember your stuff. Remember the past, kind of (pause) it's kind of sad and happy at the same time." The role of music and singing in James's life was extremely complex but also appeared to be extremely life-giving. His

sense of self was positively impacted by singing and musical interaction with his peers. Hargreaves, Miell, and MacDonald's (2002) second category of musical identities, *music in identities* (p. 2), accurately described how music was influencing James' identity development.

### **Pilot Study Findings: Matthew's Musical/Vocal Identity**

For Matthew, Hargreaves et al.'s (2002) first category of musical identities, *identities in music* (p. 2), better describes the role of music in his life. His primary vocal model had always been his father. While growing up, his father would sing to him before bed. He would sing Chinese songs and other favorite songs. According to Matthew, singing was the only time when Chinese was used at home, and his father was the only parent who sang to him. When I asked him who he heard singing the most these days, his response was,

my brother . . . couple years ago, it might have been my dad. But, he doesn't sing for us that much anymore . . . He's gotten a lot busier . . . But when it's late at night, he'll come into our room and sleep on the bottom bunk. . . He won't sing. He'll just sleep there.

Matthew's musical and vocal identities were rooted in his family, and his father's singing. However, his father's busy schedule prevented him from continuing to be the primary vocal role model in Matthew's life. Therefore, the binary in Matthew's story was between Mathew's singing past and his singing present. A male, musical role model was important for Matthew; therefore, he has found other role models outside of his family. When Matthew was in fifth grade, the male director of his musical who was, "energetic," "more of the singer," and, "everybody loved [him]" provided a strong musical role model for him. According to Matthew, his current participation in a male choir, in sixth grade, was important because, "I just got to know these boys. These older



boys and grad students. And I got to hang out with my friend.” Much like James, friends were important to Matthew; however, they were not emphasized as strongly as the male role models. The importance of peers for James was extremely apparent. Matthew, on the other hand, mentioned them infrequently and with little emphasis. Matthew’s musical identity was based upon his relationship with his father. As he looked outward to re-negotiate his musical identity, he was searching for what was familiar rather than what was separate.

In looking outward for new musical role models, Matthew had found new ways in which to musically connect back inwards to his family. In the interview he mentioned the connection he and his father had with the *Hamilton* musical. They both liked to sing the songs from the musical. According to Matthew, his grandmother even loved it. During the group session, Matthew chose to teach us a song from *Hamilton*. He introduced it by saying, “this is my favorite to sing with my brothers. Me and my brothers sing. We all have parts. We assign all of the parts.”

### **Pilot Study Findings: Ethnic Identity**

Although ethnic identity is a salient part of my study, I was unable to garner much information from James and Matthew regarding their ethnic identities. Matthew spoke briefly about his father’s use of Chinese in singing but otherwise did not expound upon his father’s Chinese American background. Three possible reasons may explain the richness of detail about musical identity and lack of detail about ethnic identity. First, both boys came from families in which each parent had a different ethnic identity. One possible explanation is that the union of two identities may form a new combined identity; therefore, the strong characteristics of the Korean, Taiwanese, Jewish or

Chinese-American identities may have been less important to the family than the combination of the two. The other reason may be that these two boys were in what Phinney (1989) calls the first stage. This stage is characteristic of, “little or no exploration of one’s ethnicity” (p. 38). And finally, the third reason may be that I did not ask the right questions or did not have enough rapport established with them.

### **Pilot Study Findings: School Music Instruction**

Both boys clearly articulated their definitions of good music teaching. For James, an effective music teacher was, “welcoming” and not strict. He learned best with, “hands on experience.” He said, “hands on experience helps me to understand the concept.” In addition, he preferred informal settings. He talked about singing for fun in free time. Further, he stated, “I just like to play, like, you can start a beat and turn, turn the channels, which have different sounds like a trumpet, guitar, so it’s kind of fun to mess around with.”

For Matthew, singing in music class was important. On four occasions he emphasized the need for more singing. The following two conversations about singing in the classroom took place during the interview.

Emily: And if you could change one thing about your music class, what would it be?

Matthew: Make everybody sing at least once, maybe.

Emily: Make everybody sing at least once.

Matthew: Yeah, have like this singing thing that every, where everybody could sing.

Emily: You like when everyone can sing.

Matthew: Yeah, I like it when everybody can. But nobody will sing.

Emily: Nobody will sing?

Matthew: Nobody wants to sing.

Emily: Nobody wants to sing. So, why do you think that is?

Matthew: Uh, it might be too embarrassing.

Emily: So, if you were to be a singing teacher for kids your age ... for you and James and ... what do you think that teacher could do to make it more comfortable and not as embarrassing?

Matthew: I don't know. Mmm, make sure that everybody gets to sing. Or, we do it as a group. It's not as embarrassing.

In his first statement, Matthew suggested, “making” people sing but his following statements emphasized that teachers should provide the opportunity to sing. He talked about how his peers are oftentimes inhibited and so he offered a solution—group singing. Much like James, Matthew valued active music participation, and the act of singing was important for him.

### **Pilot Study to Current Study**

Based upon the process of implementing my pilot study as well as the outcomes incurred, I made several modifications to this study. First, initially I had planned to conduct both individual interviews and focus group interviews with students. However, by conducting the group interview in my pilot study, I recognized that with this age group, individual interviews were more fruitful. The two boys were more inhibited when they were with their friend than when they were being interviewed individually. In addition, although the art activity in the pilot study proved to be meaningful, due to the number of participants and time restrictions for data collection, it was not viable for me to duplicate in this study. Second, I was able to test my interview protocol in the pilot study. I discarded the questions that did not resonate with the students and further refined

my research questions based upon this trial. Finally, I learned from my pilot interview process how crucial it was to establish rapport with adolescents prior to their individual interviews. In addition, the discussion about my specific classroom observations might provide a more specific way about which to discuss their music class experience.

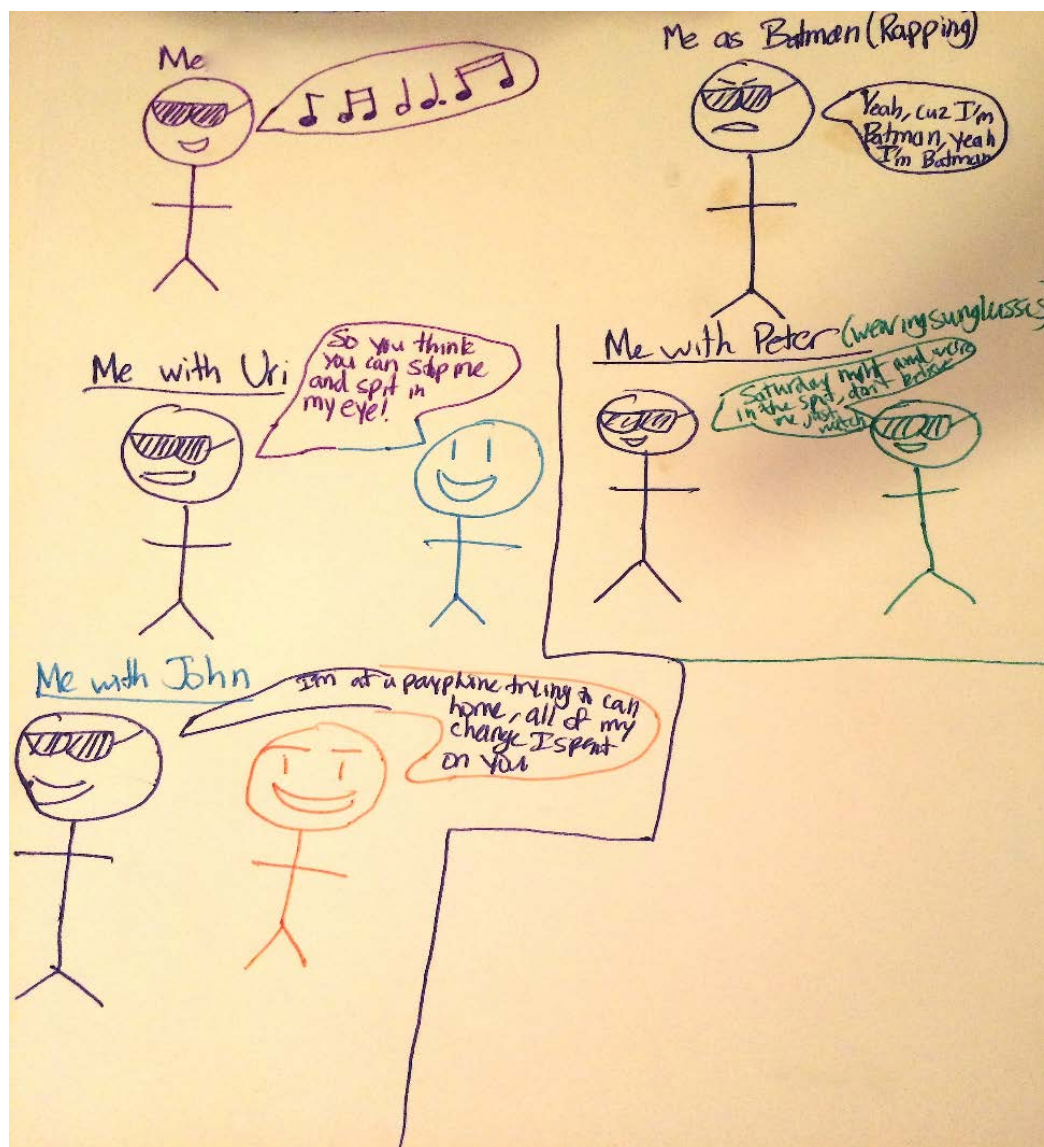


Figure 2. Pilot study student artwork: James.

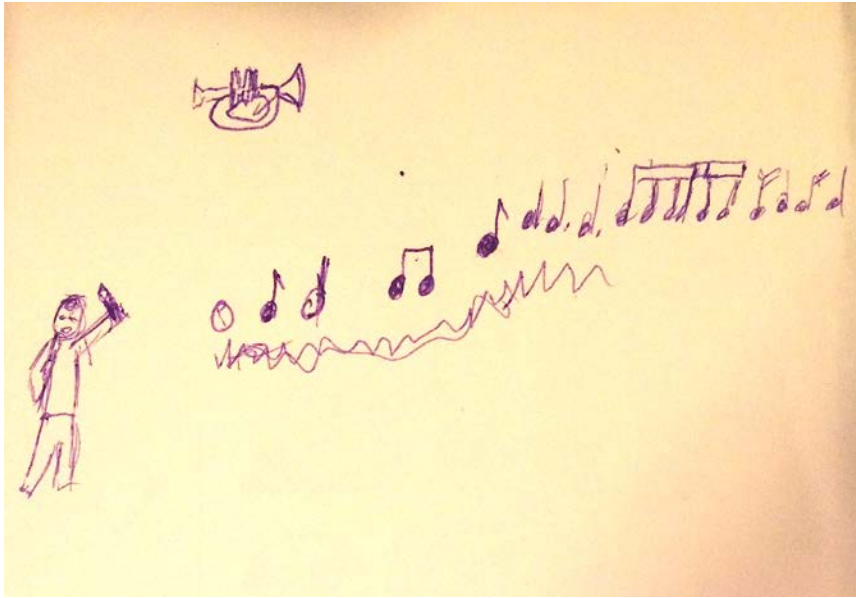


Figure 3. Pilot study student artwork: Matthew.

### **“Purposeful Sampling” Criteria**

I used, “purposeful sampling” (Creswell, 2013, p. 100) to choose the case for my study. The criteria I used to choose the case included criteria about the school at-large, student demographics and age as well as the teachers’ backgrounds. I looked for a school in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area with a majority of the student body being students of color. Because I was investigating both the general music teaching and the ways in which specific discourses about singing were employed in the general music classroom, the teachers in my study needed to have music education backgrounds with an emphasis in voice. In addition, based upon my conceptual framework, and as a means of better understanding the cultural synchronicity of white teachers in primarily non-white contexts, both teachers needed to be white. I chose the general music classroom because it is an unelected class and compulsory in this state until sixth grade. I suspected that the perspectives of students who were taking a required course were less likely to be tainted by seeking teacher approval than if they had elected to take the course. The final criteria

for my study was that students, in addition to being diverse and from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, needed to be within the early stages of adolescence where identity negotiation and formation were salient parts of their lives.

### **Participants and Setting**

Based on my criteria, the large, Midwestern, public K-8 school at which I chose to conduct my research is located in an area in which the median household income, \$42,076, is lower than the U.S. average of \$53,482 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014). In addition, the area in which the school is located has a poverty rate of 21.3% which is higher than the national average of 14.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014). Over 70% of the student population receives free breakfast and lunch. The school is ethnically diverse with students of color being in the majority. Seventy-one percent of the student population is African American and 8.8% is white. The demographics of this school are representative of the district at large.

The school, a large, old red-brick building is situated between a residential and industrial area. To the north, stands an abandoned high-rise parking garage next to a large vacant lot. Directly south, sits a small church nestled amongst the residential area. The residential area is more expansive than one neighborhood and consists of multiple streets, some of which run diagonally through the others. On some of the streets, small, humble-looking houses are maintained and visibly vibrant homes to families. Other intersecting streets have homes that are boarded and properties that are abandoned. The roads and sidewalks are visibly worn, but the large trees that line the residential streets indicate the life and longevity of this community.

The students from this community in the two general music classes at which I conducted my observations and with whom I conducted interviews have rich cultural backgrounds. Seven of the students are African American, two students are from Honduran or Honduran-Mexican immigrant families, one is Latino-American, one is from an Eritrean immigrant family and three have European heritage. The two music teachers in this study are both white women in their mid-thirties. Both have bachelor's and master's degrees in music education with an emphasis in voice from primarily white, non-urban institutions. I chose their fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms because general music is compulsory in these grades. In addition, fifth- and sixth-grade students, typically ages 10-12, are in the early stages of adolescence (World Health Organization, 2016).

Ms. Greene, the fifth-grade music teacher, born and raised in Texas, taught at a variety of schools, including multiple public schools and one private catholic school before coming to this location. She has taught elementary school for the past 15 years. Of all the locations, she considers this school to be her favorite location, primarily because of the large set of Orff instruments and the larger classroom. She emphasized the importance of Orff curriculum and materials in her teaching approach. Initially she had not wanted to be a music educator and had pursued criminal justice. She changed her career path because she found that music education came more easily to her than the demands of the criminal justice major. However, she never wanted to teach elementary music, and in our conversations, it seemed that this teaching job was not always rewarding for her. As an excellent musician, Ms. Greene strove to impart the same musical literacy to her students.

Although Ms. Miller, the sixth-grade teacher, had a similar educational background, her teaching approach and demeanor were vastly different from Ms. Greene. Ms. Miller's laid-back, jovial style contrasted Ms. Greene's organized, formal manner. Although Ms. Greene was candid with me, her communication style was professional. Ms. Miller communicated with me in the same way that she communicated with the students. She had a warm, familiar tone and put me at ease when I first visited. Ms. Miller mirrored her students' speech and gestures, not in a contrived, superficial manner but in a way that allowed students to be at ease in her classroom. The teachers' demeanors and teaching approaches will be further detailed in Chapter IV.

## **Procedures**

Based upon Shaw's (2014) "Methods of Data Generation" (p. 92), Table 1 provides an outline of the data collection that took place over the course of three months. Three forms of data were collected. These included twice-weekly observations of each music classroom, individual student interviews, and teacher interviews. In addition, material culture which included teacher biographies, music curriculum and classroom materials were collected.

The first five weeks consisted solely of classroom observations as a means of building rapport with the students and teachers and allowing for detailed field notes. In addition, this allowed me to, "examine discourse norms unique to each setting" (Shaw, 2014, p. 92). In addition to detailed field notes, I audio recorded each class to allow for further reflection as well as transcription of discourse I was not able to account for quickly enough during observations. Audio transcriptions also allowed for a "member check" of the quotes and discussions I made note of in my field notes.



Table 1

*Data Collection Outline*

Week(s)	Data-Collection Method	Purpose	Strategies
1-5	Observations	To build rapport and “examine discourse norms unique to each setting” (Shaw, p. 92).	Fieldnotes and audio recordings of each class to allow for further reflection, verification and “member check”
6-9	Observations & Student Interviews	<p>“To probe perceptions of discourse norms” (Shaw, p. 92). To discover individual perceptions of vocal training relative to musical, vocal, and ethnic identity. To discover congruence or incongruence between vocal teaching in classroom and students’ own conceptions of singing.</p> <p>“Triangulation of interview data” (p. 92).</p>	Interview questions based upon research questions and observations.
10	Observations & Teacher interviews	<p>“To probe teachers’ awareness and perceptions of discourse norms; to clarify teachers’ intentions” (p. 92)</p> <p>To determine teachers’ beliefs about vocal teaching (preferred technique and approach) and perceptions of diversity within the classroom.</p>	Interview questions based upon observations and student interviews.
11-12	Observations & Student/Teacher Member Checks	“Review and clarification” (p. 92).	“Member check: participants comment on analysis” (p.92).

In the sixth week of my data collection, in addition to observations, I began the individual student interviews, “to probe perceptions of discourse norms” (Shaw, 2014, p. 92). In addition, I sought to discover the students’ perceptions of the singing in the classroom and the ways in which they compared to their own beliefs about singing. The

three research questions provided the foundation for the interview questions which included: (a) students' musical backgrounds; (b) students' perceptions of teaching; (c) students' hypothetical conceptions of a meaningful music classroom. I developed the interview protocol based upon my research questions, pilot study, and the observations I had already conducted in the classroom.

Weeks 7 through 9 were similar to week 6 in which twice-weekly observations of each classroom and individual student interviews were conducted. In addition, while collecting data, I began to simultaneously triangulate and analyze the data using the, "constant comparative method" of analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 73) which will be discussed in more detail in the following subsection. During the 10th week of data collection, in addition to observations, I conducted interviews with both teachers, "to probe teachers' awareness and perceptions of discourse norms; to clarify teachers' intentions" (Shaw, 2014, p. 92) as well as to determine their beliefs about vocal teaching and music teaching in general. In addition, I was interested in discovering their perceptions of diversity in the classroom. I developed the teacher interview protocol based upon my observations and student interviews. During my observations, I would make note of specific pedagogical choices or student-teacher interactions about which I wanted to ask the teachers in their interviews. It was helpful to have the teacher interviews towards the end of the interview process after which I had conducted detailed observations and the students' interviews had shed light on how the classroom experience impacted them. During the final two weeks, I continued to conduct twice-weekly observations of each classroom as well as member checks with the students and teachers.

Participants were provided transcriptions of their interviews and asked to confirm that the transcription was accurate.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. The initial phase of data analysis took place simultaneously with data collection. I used the, “constant comparative method” of analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 73) while gathering data from the two classrooms. Themes and patterns which emerged from the data comparison informed the ways in which I further analyzed the data. In addition, the emergent themes further focused the interview questions and observations.

The following simultaneous data collection and analytical techniques were used for each individual research question:

1. How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background?

To discover an in-depth description of each student, individual interviews were conducted. The, “constant comparative method” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 73) of analysis was used to compare data from individual interviews and observations to determine themes.

2. How do students describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class?

Individual student interviews were triangulated with classroom observations and teacher interviews and analyzed using the, “constant comparative method” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 73) of analysis.

Emergent themes were used to inform subsequent interviews and provide focus for field note observations.

3. How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher?

Triangulation of student interviews, teacher interviews and observations allowed for a means of comparing and discovering congruence or incongruence between student and teacher perceptions.

This chapter has detailed the methodology and research design for this study, as well as the procedures for data collection and analysis.

## IV – FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how two groups of adolescent music students from a diverse urban public school perceive the singing and the music teaching in their general music classrooms. To carry out the purpose of this study, I addressed the following research questions:

1. How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background?
2. How do they describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class?
3. How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher?

In this chapter I will present the findings from the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Over the course of three months, I conducted twice-weekly classroom observations as well as semi-structured interviews with 14 fifth- and sixth grade students and two teachers. The classroom observations allowed me to build rapport with both the students and teachers prior to the interviews. In addition, the classroom observations provided me with insight into each teacher's unique classroom culture. When I initially chose these two teachers, I assumed both teachers would be teaching with relatively similar approaches based upon their educational backgrounds; however, much to my surprise, their teaching approaches were different.

The first teacher, Ms. Greene, taught with a traditional approach that one would expect to see taught in university music education programs. As an accomplished

musician herself, her teaching goals were to provide her students with the tools with which to read music notation and sight read simple songs. The second teacher, Ms. Miller, taught with a multicultural and multi-centric approach. Her class studied music from around the world and engaged with composition and active music-making in ways that were pertinent for each musical tradition. Her goal for the music class was to explore diverse musical traditions and find ways in which students could connect their own experience to those traditions. She used a musical theater, belting mix vocal technique.

Descriptions of each student will be woven in with the interview data to provide a richer depiction of each child. In the interviews, the students provided complex and meaningful insight. My hope is to provide a window into each child's world and in doing so honor each of their voices. Pseudonyms for both the teachers and the students will be used in this chapter. Additional background information on the school setting and teacher and student demographics can be found in Chapter III: Participants and Setting.

The findings from the interviews and observations are organized under four broad categories:

1. What is Music for These Students?
2. "A Tale of Two Classrooms"
3. Students' Vocal Profiles
4. If They Could Teach the Music Class, How Would They Teach?

### **What is Music for These Students?**

From the first category, I found two salient categories of answers from the interviews, the first being the relationship between music and singing and the children's

identities and how they use them as a form of self-expression. The second category was the intimate relationship between music and family.

### **Self-expression and Identity**

When I asked the students about their favorite music, I was struck by the depth of their responses. Their beliefs about music and the function of music in their lives were complex and emotional. Precious, for example, the youngest of five girls, connected the text of her favorite song to her oldest sister, their relationship, and her aspirations to be like her sister.

I like gospel. My favorite song is a church song. In church, there's a song called *I'm a Soldier, in an Army for the Lord*, and that's my favorite song. 'Cause when I grow up, I'm going to be a soldier and every time I sing that song at church, I think of me and my future, and I think of one of my sisters-- on the 31st on this month, on Halloween, actually, she'll be in the Army for 3 years. She sometimes, she misses my birthdays because she has drill, and she even misses her birthday 'cause of drill. But she, she always makes up for it, but I don't get mad because it's her job. Sometimes, I . . . I do get mad, but after a while, I realized that it's her job, like she has to do it.

Tamila, an effervescent, intelligent, and curious fifth grader who was first to invite me to the school festival for pizza and nachos, believed that each person possessed a unique song. She described her own song for me. "My song would be really long. A long note, but . . . truthful." Tamila lives with her grandparents and brother. She sings church music with her grandparents and her earliest musical memories are of singing gospel music in church. She described the ways in which music can be a form of self-expression.

There's some songs make you sad, some songs make you happy. And sometimes people like to get emotional and sad. Like if someone gets fired out their job they like to listen to sad songs and just let it all out.

Much like Tamila, Aisha spoke about music being emotionally complex. Both girls described emotionally difficult life events that they had undergone or were currently undergoing. Discussions about music, for Tamila and Aisha, were inextricably linked to the hardships they had faced. For Aisha, singing provided her with an outlet to express some of the emotional turmoil she was experiencing.

I express myself with singing. Music for me I mean, it just expresses who I am. And music entertains and can get us to start dancing. And music can be just awesome in so many good ways, sad in the same ways, and harsh in the other ways.

Me and my friends, we sing, we write songs together and most of the songs are to me – love. Like that’s my topic of songs. Or sometimes they might be scary or sometimes it might be . . . but my topic really is love.

Kesha also talked about how she used singing as a form of self-expression and how her vocal identity contributed to her self-esteem. She described her favorite music and the reasons why she chose to express herself with this music.

Well, um, I think personally that I can sing pretty good. I mean, I’m not the best singer in the world and I’m not the worst, so I think ... singing makes me feel more confident. And singing is really fun, and when I sing, like if someone says, “Well, she can’t sing” well, when I sing it’s like I feel I *can* sing.

I sing a lot of Melody Martinez because I’m weird. (laughs) And she’s really crazy but I just like her music because she likes to express herself in different ways than other artists. Like, other artists talk about gangs and violence and she will just talk about her childhood and how it was.

## **Music and Family**

Many of the students’ musical preferences and musical identities were interlinked with their families. Kesha recounted a memorable musical moment in her life and the role her family played in her musical confidence.

My first musical experience was in third grade at another school I was going to. My mom had asked me did I want to um, want to sign up for this play we was doing in school, and it was a musical so, I was like, “yeah”, so then I had to sing in front of everybody and I was kind of scared at first, but then I seen my mom and my brother in the audience and I was like, “I can do this.”



Alma was eager to share about her family's musical traditions. Her parents emigrated from Honduras bringing with them the rich musical and cultural traditions with which she is surrounded. She made a distinction between the music she learns in music class and her family's musical traditions, which she never had to learn because they are a part of her: "I be dancing and singing bachata with my mom ... Um, I didn't learn it, it's in my blood."

Similarly, Precious, Isabella, and Destiny described the ways in which music and family were interlinked in their lives. Precious considered music to be an important part of her life and therefore, something about which she was serious. For her, the interlinking of the two demonstrated the importance of each in her life. She said, "I wouldn't do songs just like silly, or somethin'. I'll do something about family, or friends or how much people enjoy being with their family and their friends." Similarly, Isabella described the ways in which music, family and culture were interconnected in her life.

My dad makes his music by his heart and all his songs have a meaning and while he sings it's kind of like a tradition for our house because my grandpa used to sing, and my grandpa's dad used to sing. So, my dad really likes to sing, and all his brothers and my uncles love to sing too. So, when I listen to music I just like it to be heartfelt like it has to have meaning, like my dad's.

I connect with my dad's music. I'm not saying there's no meaning here [at school]. Um. My dad is like it has a different meaning and he composes about us and about all the wonderful things and he makes a different type of music like he puts his heart to it and he writes it in Spanish. He can't speak English that well.

I asked Isabella how she would feel if they sang Spanish and her dad's type of music in music class. She responded emphatically, "I would feel like I'm truly myself because my singing voice is kind of like...my voice. Um, my voice is...me! My style."

Destiny's earliest musical memory, as well as other musical memories, included her family. She recounted, "Sometimes, when I was like three or four, my grandma used

to read bed stories to me, they used to have singing in it. She used to sing to me that was inside the book. The song that was inside of the books.”

Throughout my discussions with the students, I found that the discussion about music, for many of them was inextricably linked to the discussions about family and culture. This was the case whether they favored their family’s music, like Alma, Isabella, and others, or whether, like Mercy, they preferred popular music. She said, “I like to listen to hip-hop and pop music. My family listens to religious music. They listen to music from Eritrea, because they were born in Africa.”

Davion shared his family’s passion for rap, however, when it came to the subjects about which he rapped, he did not include his family.

Emily: What, is your favorite music?

Davion: Rap.

Emily: What about your family?

Davion: Rap. Me and my stepdad.

Emily: What type of things do you like to rap about?

Davion: Um, everything ... But everything that I know

Emily: Can you give me some examples?

Davion: Like money.

Emily: Like what about money?

Davion: Like what you, what you could do with it.

Emily: Can you give me an example of what you could do with it?

Davion: Spend it. Save it.

Emily: Would you ever talk about your family in your rap?

Davion: No.

Emily: What's the most important thing to you about your family?

Davion: Them being alive.

The above conversation I had with Davion was indicative of his soft spoken, to-the-point, manner of holding conversations. Yet, with just a few words, he was able to convey the complexities of his reality and a mature awareness about life's indeterminacy.

This was a common occurrence throughout my conversations with the students. As we spoke about what one might assume to be a seemingly uncontroversial topic for adolescents of this age, the complexities of the students' lives made their way into the discussion about music. Although, I was hesitant to pursue topics that seemed psychologically outside of the realm of this study and my expertise, I realized that the very grown up realities of these young students intersected all aspects of their lives. Music seemed to provide a powerful and positive way of negotiating these complexities.

Matt, a shy, small in stature, and quiet boy, shared his family's passion for country music. Without me asking why he shared this passion, he explained how he had to stay in the hospital for three weeks after birth due to complications. He links the singing of country music to his family's celebration of his discharge from the hospital.

I like country like my mom, my sister, and my grandma. Once I turned three weeks old my mom and my family were singing country around me -- because I came home from the doctors.

Much like Davion and Matt, Sarah described complexities in her life through her discussions about music and family. Sarah, a sweet and introspective girl with thick bottle cap glasses and long blonde hair came to our interview with large holes in the knees of her tights and stains on her clothes. This did not phase her, as she was excited to

share her thoughts on singing and music. She exuded a pure love for singing and for learning new musical instruments. She talked about how her father had a band and was teaching her multiple instruments. Her struggle with ADHD and the ways in which her father helped her made its way into the conversation about music.

Um, I'm, I'm not very picky with music, but my favorite is country ... my grandfather likes country as well ... My dad likes metal, he's a drummer and has a band. His band comes over to practice. My dad is teaching me how to play guitar. It's very hard for me to play because I'm ADHD so it's hard to focus both things at once. I can strum right now but it's very hard for me to do the fingers and ... So, my dad's teaching me...

### **“A Tale of Two Classrooms”**

The second broad category is “A Tale of Two Classrooms.” Without my prompting, the students described the two classrooms as stark opposites. The sixth graders had taken both music classes and were able to provide a comparison. The fifth graders had not experienced any other form of music teaching but still were insightful as they described the ways in which music teaching could be more meaningful for them.

I divided this category into the descriptions of the two classrooms based upon the students' perceptions and my observations. The first classroom is labeled the “Culturally Incongruent Classroom” because plurality was not prioritized. The second classroom, I label the “Culturally Congruent Classroom” because plurality was emphasized and valued. The teacher descriptions are based upon the interviews I conducted with the teachers as well as field notes from my observations.

### **Culturally Incongruent Classroom**

After receiving her bachelor's and master's degrees in music education with a vocal emphasis, Ms. Greene, a white woman in her mid-thirties, taught at a variety of

schools, including multiple public schools and one private catholic school. She has taught elementary school for the past 15 years. Of all the locations, she considers her current school to be her favorite location, primarily because of the large set of Orff instruments and the larger classroom. When I asked her whether her music education degrees prepared her for all the different teaching locations, she responded, “Not really. No, I think I’ve learned more from experience more than anything. I learned more in the Orff training than I did in college.” She further elaborated upon the Orff certification process and her subsequent Orff professional development workshops, which she attends regularly. This training has provided her with the tools with which to teach elementary music. She demonstrated a commitment to furthering her education through professional development as a means to better teach her students. I then further asked her about her teaching philosophy and her initial reasons for pursuing music education.

It wasn’t what I wanted to do. I actually went to college as a criminal justice major. I couldn’t keep up. This just came naturally to me. I never wanted to teach elementary. I was just going to do choir and band.

I then asked Ms. Greene whether she has been happy with this career path to which she replied: “Yes and no. Depends on the day. Some days I don’t want to do it anymore, but I don’t know what I would do.” When I asked her whether she found it rewarding, she said, “sometimes; not on a daily basis.” I asked her whether her students brought her peace or joy, and she responded, “No, I’m waiting for that peace. I don’t know if it’s going to happen.”

The considerable amount of time I spent in the classroom observing and outside of the classroom in discussion with the students and Ms. Greene, I recognized a clear disconnect between the teacher and the students. I sympathized with both the students

and Ms. Greene because the lack of understanding and communication from both sides seemed to get progressively worse. A large majority of each class was spent on discipline, assigning detentions, taking away basketball or dance privileges, and calling the principal to come and reprimand the class. I have written in my field notes:

Why was lunch detention assigned? They are well-behaved. I'm not even sure what she wants—complete quiet? What are the expectations for behavior? Why expect kids to be quiet all day? Why should talking occasionally during class lead to principal coming down to class? 'classroom management' seems to make the teacher angry and resistant.

When I asked Ms. Greene about the challenges of teaching at this school, without hesitation she said, "behavior." She said that it was worse at this current school than others at which she had taught. When I asked her how her college education prepared her to manage behavior, she replied, "I don't remember learning strategies for this type of situation." She further elaborated upon the situation at her school.

They just know how to push your buttons. I don't know, it's a different culture. ... (pause). You can tell there's not a whole lot of discipline at home. Because parents say they don't act like that at home, but you know, they do the same thing everywhere. So, it's just different.

I asked Ms. Greene what strategies have worked for her. She responded, "I've been trying not to let all the little things get to me, but it's hard. When it gets to the point when I'll just explode, I just call an administrator." Interestingly, during one class observation, I wrote in my field notes,

Ms. Greene is more patient today. She allowed a bit of chatter and has a better pace today. She ignored small discipline issues and kept pace with the instruments. She re-directed better.

During that class, the students were better behaved and more engaged and the principal was absent from that session.

### **A Typical Day in Ms. Greene's Class**

Ms. Greene started her class with a welcome song. Students, while sitting in a semi-circle, sang, "Welcome welcome, everybody welcome. Welcome, welcome, everybody here." Ms. Greene asked for a, "nice pretty sound." Following the singing, Ms. Greene asked her students to stand and clap rhythm patterns that were projected onto the screen. Next, Ms. Greene introduced a body percussion pattern which she subsequently taught by breaking it down into steps. Following the body percussion activity, Ms. Greene asked her students to return to their assigned seats on the carpet after which she asked them to talk about *ostinatos*. She asked, "what is an *ostinato*?" to which the students responded, "a repeated pattern." Then she had the students repeat *ostinato* patterns on the xylophones and glockenspiels. She would first demonstrate a three-note or four-note pattern and then have the students repeat the pattern. She also explained proper sticking technique for the instruments. Sometimes she would sing and name the note as she played it and students would then repeat the played and sung pattern. Following the *ostinato* exercise, Ms. Greene distributed a clip board, paper and pencil to each student. She then asked them questions about melodic contour and binary form. After the discussion, she had students individually write rhythms and represent melodic contour and binary form on their paper.

### **Student Profiles from Ms. Greene's Class**

**Precious.** Precious, a precocious, 10-year-old, African American student likes gospel and sings in her church choir as well as a local children's choir. The youngest of five girls, Precious exudes confidence and clearly articulates her opinions about music,

family, and culture. She admires her older sister who is in the army and hopes to follow her career path and become a soldier as well.

**Tamila.** Tamila, also 10 years old and African American, lives with her grandparents and brother. She sings church music with her grandparents at church and at home, although she mentioned that her grandmother also loves the artist Prince. Tamila's personality can be best described as effervescent. In our interview she was as curious about me as I was about her and asked if I could work with her class. She said, "it would be nice if you could come and do some things and see what you can do since you're at school right now."

**Alma.** Alma, a petite and cheerful 11-year-old whose parents emigrated to the United States from Honduras, was eager to share about her family's rich musical and cultural traditions. She also spoke about the ways in which her family was able to maintain these traditions in the United States because of their Honduran community. She exuded a passion for the music and dance of her community and was eager to show me some of the dance steps.

**Isabella.** Isabella, a warm and grounded 11-year-old girl from a Honduran-Mexican immigrant family, described the close relationship between herself, her parents and her three sisters. Her musical culture played an important role in her immediate and extended family's traditions. She spoke extensively about her Spanish church community and her participation in her church choir. For her, music and singing are tied to her community and her faith.

**Lori.** Lori, a stocky, serious, 11-year-old girl with European heritage was the first to volunteer to be interviewed. Lori lives with her mom and her two older brothers. She



shares a passion for hip hop with her mom and described how she and her mom dance together at home. Her first musical memory was of her mom singing songs to her at bedtime.

**Destiny.** Destiny, a soft-spoken, African-American, 10-year-old girl who was often reprimanded in class, spoke openly and candidly with me about her beliefs about music. She and her mother, grandmother and aunt share a passion for singing and Beyoncé's singing in particular, although she mentioned that her grandmother prefers to listen to, "old school music." Music plays a salient role in Destiny's relationship with her grandmother. As one of four children, with younger twin sisters and an older brother, Destiny's Grandmother has played an important role in her upbringing.

**Mercy.** Mercy, a bright, well-spoken, 11-year-old girl grew up in the United States after her parents emigrated from Eritrea. The youngest of four siblings, Mercy spoke fondly of her Eritrean family and community both in the United States and in Eritrea. Her musical interests include both popular culture and her family's religious music and she expressed a passion for singing and dancing. One of her fondest musical memories was of her sister's engagement party where her whole family danced and sang together.

**Matt.** Matt, a shy, small in stature, kind-hearted, 10-year-old boy with European heritage, shared his family's passion for country music. Without my asking why he shared this passion, he explained how he had to stay in the hospital for three weeks after birth due to complications. He links the singing of country music to his family's celebration of his discharge from the hospital. Matt spoke about his close relationship with his mother, sister, and grandmother, and how he enjoyed singing with his mother.

**Sarah.** Sarah, a sweet, introspective, 11-year-old girl with thick bottle cap glasses, long blonde hair and with European heritage oftentimes had stains on her clothes and holes in her tights. She spoke openly with me about her passion for music and singing as well as her own academic struggles. Sarah spoke about her close relationship with her father and the salient role music played in their relationship. Although I often saw her struggling to keep up in class, particularly with the melodic patterns on the xylophones, she never seemed to get discouraged. In our interview, she explained that being the best musician was not as important to her as having the opportunity to express herself with music.

### **Strict Discipline and Classroom Management**

The students described Ms. Greene's fifth-grade class as a strict environment where students are frequently disciplined. They juxtaposed the discipline in Ms. Greene's class with the freedom in Ms. Miller's. Jayla said, "Ms. Greene, she's very strict and that's what I like about Ms. Miller, like she's free. She's isn't like, 'Do this or you're going to get an F.'" Kesha's philosophy was the following:

This class [Ms. Miller's] is more fun. Ms. Greene's class, I think that music class is more just a place for them to go and play and get into trouble and get kicked out of class. 'Cuz like no one is actually trying to do the work. Everyone is just trying to use that class as a way to escape the everyday life of learning.

When I asked Kesha why she thought they were always getting into trouble, she responded:

'Cuz they didn't like what they were doing. She never switched up what we were doing. We were always doing the same thing every day. All we did was sing the same songs and we just looked at the board and said like "ti ti ta" and stuff . . . And then everybody would just be disrespectful to her and... talk back and stuff. And she would just... she would just call the principal.

Kesha connected discipline, student interest and student behavior. She suggested that student misbehavior was caused by a lack of interest in the content being taught.

Similarly, Tamila emphasized the student misbehavior:

Well, we really don't get to sing a lot because the students are very bad, and she has to send ... I forgot what it's called, something ... But it's like the principal got to come down and assist it because people acting bad, not listening and stuff. So then, we really don't get to sing but we get to play instruments and sometimes sing.

Although she was not one of the students to be disciplined, she connected the classroom environment with her lack of ability to show her “real voice.” When I asked Tamila why she thought her peers were often getting into trouble, she replied, “they’ll like play, not listen, talk, jump around and stuff. But I never really sing my real voice in front of anyone.”

### **Discipline Over Relevance, a Downward Spiral**

My field notes reflect a similar sentiment as those expressed by Tamila and Kesha. I observed very little music-making. Class activities did not engage the students’ interest. The amount of time spent on discipline and little time spent on music and activities which may have been more relevant for the students, contributed to increasing student disengagement and disinterest. The mismatch between Ms. Greene’s expectations and the students’ expectations, and a large reason for student and teacher frustration, seemed to be largely curricular.

The students described a disconnect between music at home and music at school. Alma noted, “well, in music class and ... Home, it’s like a different culture.” Similarly, Isabella stated, “In my house the song is more like love, family and things like that. But my house I don’t know how to explain it but it’s really different [from school].” As

mentioned earlier, when I asked Isabella how she would feel if she sang Spanish and her family's music in music class she eagerly responded, "I would feel like I'm truly myself." Other students who described an incongruence between the music at home and the music in school could hardly imagine having their home music at school. Mercy described her musical experience outside of school: "I'm in the church choir with my friends. It's like Christian music that we do for Jesus and all the things from the Bible. We use drums to help us keeping the beat." When I asked her how she would feel if she sang that music in music class, she responded, "I would feel kind of weird because it's in a different language. What I sing is in a different language, so yeah." Much like Mercy, Precious seemed to have never considered singing music that was relevant for her in music class:

I mean, it'll kind of be different from the songs from like the normal songs we sing [in music class], 'cause it kind of like, it kind of has a beat a little bit, but I still would not mind singing it in music class.

Throughout my field notes, I often took note of restless energy and the lack of movement in Ms. Greene's class. I was impressed with how well the students could perform the rhythmic activities. For many of them, I wrote, "their whole bodies seemed to yearn to dance when they clapped the rhythmic patterns or repeated the body percussion sequence," although the clapping patterns and strictly-choreographed body percussion allowed little room for extra movement. Luis reflected on his experience in Ms. Greene's music class the year before and related it to his current experience with Ms. Miller. A particularly salient point he and others made, one that I also often took note of in my field notes, was a lack of opportunity for movement which, in turn, created more student restlessness.

In Ms. Greene's class, we would just, like, sit. I mean, we would move, but like ... Not like we do in this class. Most of the time we'd just get like, rhythm sticks, and then that's all we would do.

One example from my field notes was when, "the students stood and did body percussion. Ms. Greene had them sit after two minutes. They seemed frustrated that they had to sit again." When I asked Ms. Greene about how she chooses her curriculum, she said, "I write it all myself. I go to Orff workshops." I asked her if she found that her students' interests changed from school to school. She responded:

Definitely different interests. I still do the same things I did at the private catholic school. The fifth graders at the private catholic school seemed a little more innocent than here. Here, if they don't like something they have no problem expressing it.

I then asked Ms. Greene about the Orff philosophy. She said, "Involve the child as much as you can with speech, body percussion, instruments." She asserted that it has helped her immensely in her teaching. Although Ms. Greene used body percussion and instruments, based upon the students' perceptions and my field notes, there was a disconnect between what Ms. Greene thought was relevant for the students and what actually was relevant.

### **Strict Vocal Approach - Western Classical Style**

In addition to strict classroom discipline, the students perceived the singing in Ms. Greene's classroom as one in which their bodies and voices were strictly disciplined. In my notes, I frequently quoted Ms. Greene's language about posture and body containment: "Hands down, touch your legs . . . singing posture, sitting on pockets, legs are down flat, back is nice and straight and tall." Additionally, I noted how shocked I was at the way students were required to enter the hallway from the music classroom,

“each student’s arms were crossed tightly across his chest, his chin was to be tucked, eyes lowered, mouths closed—it shocked me.”

None of the singing activities were rhythmic and mostly involved the head voice. As Ms. Greene mentioned to me, “I try to get them to get into their head voice instead of the speaking talking voice.” I also noted that her speaking voice in the classroom was particularly bright, head-voice heavy and projected well. When I listened to the recordings of the classes I observed, I was struck by the overwhelming presence and lack of warmth in her voice. Her vocal production, while speaking, remained the same even when she used a microphone to instruct the class. The students perceived Ms. Greene’s vocal approach to be strict based on the focus on head voice and emphasis on proper singing posture. The fixed posture allowed little opportunity for body movement while singing. The students perceived this as a disciplining of their voices.

For Aisha, the disciplining of her voice translated as a disciplining of her own person. She said, “But before in Ms. Greene’s class, I mean, it was just strict. Like, straight up strict- right posture, and all that stuff.” She went on to say,

It seemed like if I was to be myself, I’d be wrong. That was a problem. So, I didn’t really do everything, like . . . I was that one kid that really deliberately did everything the opposite of what she said. Like, Ms. Greene, because she’d say like “sing with a golf ball in your mouth” like “oh.”

Kesha attributed the fear of singing that many of the students experienced in class to the strict vocal teaching: “I think they’re [in Ms. Greene’s class] scared that they’re gonna be like, ‘Oh, he can’t sing’ or ‘Oh, she can’t sing.’ Because they’re scared that the teacher will be like, ‘Well, you don’t sing good enough for this class.’” I asked Kesha to describe the vocal teaching. She said, “She would tell us to like, sing with a golf, like we had a golf ball in our mouth, and we’d have to sit up straight and work on good singing

posture.” I, then, asked Kesha how this teaching influenced the singing. She responded, “It made singing less fun and it made us like, I was second guessing if I wanted to be in choir this year.”

Many of the students expressed a dislike for the type of singing in Ms. Greene’s class and emphasized the strict posture and mouth shape. Others recognized the ways in which the singing was different from the ways they sang outside of school. When I asked Mercy how she would describe the singing in music class, she responded, “It’s pretty different to the singing at home. The music at home is more upbeat and it’s easier to dance to. The one in Miss Greene’s, it’s more just to listen to. You can’t really dance to it.” As mentioned earlier, Precious had a similar comparison between the singing that took place in music class and at home.

I mean, it’ll kind of be different from the songs from like the normal songs we sing [in music class], ‘cause it kind of like, it kind of has a beat a little bit, but I still would not mind singing it in music class.

Many of the other students described the singing in music class as devoid of body movement and for many of the students, like Mercy, whose family is Eritrean, singing without body movement was foreign. The primary focus on the head voice was also noted by students as an aspect of the classroom singing experience that was different from singing at home. Precious compared the singing in music class to her church choir singing: “The music class is kind of higher.” Isabella offered a similar observation when I asked her to compare the singing in music class to the singing she did with her family at home: “Well, it’s really different because right here [music class] we do like a lot of high pitch things.”

The students perceived the singing in Ms. Greene's class as higher based upon the primary use of the head voice. In my field notes I have written that Ms. Greene asked for a, "nice pretty sound" which consisted of, based upon my observations, the use of pure head voice. I never heard her use a mixed sound or chest voice. Although the pitch range was appropriate for the students, they perceived the singing to be much higher because of the vocal register.

The students' negative descriptions of Ms. Greene's music class, coupled with Ms. Greene's expressions of frustration, illuminated the cultural incongruence between Ms. Greene and her students. By traditional university music standards, Ms. Greene is an excellent musician and music teacher. She has a thorough understanding of Western classical music education methods, Orff methods and Western classical vocal pedagogy. In the same vein, the students' perceptiveness, rich musical backgrounds, and authenticity became apparent to me in our interviews. My intention is not to blame Ms. Greene but rather to use this particular case to shed light on the ways normalized music practices manifest in music classrooms. Ms. Greene's commitment to teaching music in the ways she was trained to teach led to a music classroom in which the students felt silenced and she felt out of control.

### **Culturally Congruent Classroom**

Much like Ms. Greene, Ms. Miller, a white woman in her mid-thirties, has bachelor's and master's degrees in music education with a vocal emphasis as well as Orff certification. During my first observation of Ms. Miller's class, I immediately observed a different educational approach. I noted in my field notes that, "students were eager to learn, volunteered frequently and seemed to be having fun." I noted that Ms. Miller



seemed to have great rapport with the students. She spoke closely to them. I wrote, “Ms. Miller talks to them close by, like friends. There is no distinct line between the students and her.” She communicated with her students in a manner that was familiar to them and allowed for a respectful banter between herself and the students to take place during classroom instruction.

The first thing I noticed about Ms. Miller’s speaking voice was her use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) with which her students were familiar. Although she is a white woman, the use of AAVE seemed natural and was well-received by the students. Her singing style was primarily a mixed voice with belting. I never heard her use a pure head voice. As I listened to the recordings of her classes, I noted that her speaking tone was conversational and warm. The saliency of her speaking tone only became apparent to me when I listened to both teacher’s recordings in the same sitting. Ms. Greene’s bright, over-projected speaking tone was a stark contrast to Ms. Miller’s subdued and warm speaking voice.

During every observation, I wrote in my field notes that this class is a great example of flow. Students are engaged, activities are well-paced, and she provided a lot of variety. While listening to music, students were given the freedom to sit around the room, on chairs, risers, or on the floor. A few students walked around the room during a listening activity, some trying the Samba dance steps, others feeling the music. In my field notes I wrote, “Ms. Miller is relaxed when kids are jumping around—not such a, “disciplinarian.”

During one class session, Ms. Miller had the students listen to a piece of music and then write on the multiple white boards around the room what they heard. One

student wrote, “wood block thingy” to which Ms. Miller responded, “very descriptive, I like it.” During many of my observations, I noted that students were given opportunities to compose and improvise. Ms. Miller would often say, “You have the freedom to mess around with this a bit.” During one class session, they composed a piece as a class. As they were finishing the end of the composition, Ms. Miller asked students to write their ideas on the white boards. Some of the responses were: “Embellish end . . . A big boom . . . The way we came in . . . We should fade out and get quiet as we do it . . . We should slow down at the end.” The class tried all of the suggestions and discussed how they would finish the piece.

### **A Typical Day in Ms. Miller’s Class**

Ms. Miller’s classes combined elements of composition, improvisation, listening, dance, singing, and instrument-playing, with each unit structured around a particular musical culture and musical style. She began each unit with an overview of the historical and social context of each musical culture to provide a frame of reference for students’ musical exploration. With each subsequent class, students explored with more depth the socio-historical and cultural underpinnings of the music. One example, the Brazilian *Embolada*, historically influenced by both African American rap and African musical elements sparked a rich discussion and catalyzed students’ interest in the historical and cultural background of the musical form. Once students had a preliminary understanding of the musical context, they began their musical, compositional, and improvisational exploration of the musical style. In small groups, students composed Brazilian *Emboladas*, drawing from their own musical interests and backgrounds. Musical exploration sparked further discussions about the music’s cultural and historical context

and the ways in which musical forms can draw from multiple musical cultures and influences. Students engaged with the musical form both in musical and non-musical ways which allowed them to more deeply engage with the music. When Davion discovered the ways in which the Brazilian *Embolada* was influenced by African American rap, he was able to more fully connect with the musical form. His group's *Embolada* composition incorporated rap within the *Embolada* form and style. For Aisha's group, the *Embolada* composition project allowed her to incorporate her interests in choreography and singing into a new musical framework. In my field notes, I have written, "students are all eager to go first, to perform their *Embolada* compositions for their peers. No one is inhibited."

Subsequent classes within the Brazilian unit explored other Brazilian musical forms. During one class, Ms. Miller introduced the Brazilian Samba. After describing the historical and cultural framework for the musical form, Ms. Miller played a recording of Brazilian Samba. In my field notes I have written, "while listening, students are moving, feeling the music, smiling, with energy." After listening, Ms. Miller asked them to write on the board what they heard. One student wrote, "wood block thingy" to which Ms. Miller responded, "very descriptive, I like it." After listening and writing on the board, Ms. Miller had the students try the Samba dance steps. Immediately from dancing she moved to the next activity which was watching a 1940s Disney video clip with Samba. Ms. Miller asked them to, "notice anything the same or different." Students watched the video from various places in the room. Some reclined on the risers in the back of the room, others lay down on the carpet, a few sat in the chairs while others sat against the wall in the back corner of the room. After watching the video and discussing

the similarities and differences, Ms. Miller asked the students to return to their chairs for instructions. A few minutes later, the students were out of their chairs choosing drums for the next activity. With a variety of drums, the students sat on the floor with Ms. Miller and took part in an interactive video lesson on Samba drumming. The interactive video lesson, projected onto the large screen in the front of the classroom, provided step-by-step instructions from an accomplished Brazilian drummer. His lesson explored multiple rhythms and drumming patterns that were relevant for the Samba musical style. Both Ms. Miller and her students took part in the lesson. I noted in my field notes that, “all the students were engaged and eager to try the patterns.” After the video lesson, Ms. Miller asked her students which rhythms were the most difficult. They discussed what they had learned. Following the discussion, Ms. Miller had the students try the Samba dance steps to the specific drumming patterns they had learned. Ms. Miller explored each musical unit creatively and drew from a wide range of diverse sources so as to best engage her students. When the musical unit required skills beyond her expertise, she incorporated video lessons and other musical resources.

### **Student Profiles from Ms. Miller’s Class**

**Aisha.** Aisha, an eloquent, 12-year-old African American girl, who lives with her father, openly discussed the ways in which music intersected all aspects of her life and helped her to cope with hardships. As a talented singer and dancer, she used music as a means to express herself. Aisha was never shy to verbalize her opinion or protest what she believed to be unjust. One example was her discussion about school uniforms in which she said, “I mean, there are rules about what you can and cannot wear. But at the

same time, it makes us feel like we are prisoners because we're trapped." Despite the hardships Aisha had undergone, her outlook on life was one of optimism and justice.

**Kesha.** Kesha, a vibrant, African American, 12-year-old student spoke about the ways in which music functioned in her life and in the music classroom with the maturity of someone much older than she. Her rich musical home life instilled in her a passion for singing, and she shared that passion with her mother and siblings. In addition, she spoke confidently about the ways in which music connected her family and her to the broader African American community.

**Davion.** Davion, a gentle-natured, passionate, African American, 11-year-old boy expressed his passion for rap and the opportunity to be musically creative. In our interview, he asked if he could rap one of his own compositions for me. In class, Davion would often banter with Ms. Miller and respond to her statements in a call-and-response type of manner. It was apparent that her class nourished and uplifted his spirit. Davion's clothes were often torn, and his shoes were well-worn, but, particularly in Ms. Miller's class, his spirit was always bright.

**Jayla.** Jayla, an articulate, confident, African-American, 11-year-old girl spoke about her passion for gospel music and her family's deep commitment to her church. Both her church community and her mother, important and strong influences in her life, influenced her musical tastes. She explained that she did not listen to music with profanity and her mother did not condone her listening to hip hop music. In our conversation, Jayla demonstrated that in addition to being earnest and mature, she was also extremely witty and imaginative.

**Luis.** Luis, a thin, lanky, soft-spoken, 12-year-old boy with Latino heritage comes from a family of five children. His favorite music is hip hop and R&B, and although he considers himself a non-singer, he was happy to sing in Ms. Miller's class. In addition, because he struggles with sitting still in class, he felt liberated by the opportunity to move in Ms. Miller's classroom.

## **Curriculum**

In my observations, I noticed that students had a lot of autonomy as well as the opportunity to move. When I asked Ms. Miller to describe the ways in which she plans the class, this was her response:

Well, um, you know, I asked them about countries. Like what countries would you be interested in learning about? Some of them would go look at the map. And then we listed, and they just listed a bunch. You know? So, I have a, a spreadsheet I think for both the classes on the countries that they listed. And even right now, I mean we've done Brazil and Greece. And I mean, it's you know, November! But, um, but just because we've been able to kind of expand and do some of that stuff. And just because they got so into creating (laugh) ...

So, I'm like, "Wow, you can do this. It's worth it." And then, you know, listening to the other stuff, and I think, too, just letting them, I mean, they have to sit in the class all the time too. And so, um, letting them have some freedom to create their own thing within those parameters has been pretty interesting. Um, and they, they like doing that. So, I mean, that's boring stuff where I'm kind of talking to you and I'm giving you the information. But when we are learning something altogether, letting them be creative kind of on their own or come up with stuff too, I think has helped.

I also asked Ms. Miller whether she currently or in the past has used her Orff training in the classroom.

Um, yeah. I mean, Since I've had the training, used some of it. It, it's kind of dependent. I've done a lot of like movement stuff, you know, from that aspect of...And then there's still the improvisation aspect. Or composing. So, I guess it's been, it's kind of dependent on year to year.

Interestingly, Ms. Miller compared the ways in which Ms. Greene uses Orff in the classroom to her own approach.

I don't, um, you know, Ms. Greene is pretty strictly Orff. And is able, you know, I mean, and she has, she has been able to do that. And for me, I don't necessarily, I don't ever necessarily just use that curriculum.

In addition, one of Ms. Miller's reasons for not using a strictly Orff method was because of her approach to singing. She said, "But like being a singer too, like there's, you know, other folk songs and things that I want to bring into it. So, I don't say that I'm just always that [Orff]."

When I spoke with Ms. Miller's students, I was struck by how much their perceptions were in line with hers. They spoke about the aspects of her class that were most meaningful for them which included autonomy, self-expression, active music-making, and movement. Aisha, the student who "deliberately did everything the opposite of what [Ms. Greene] said," noted that Ms. Miller's class provided her with the opportunity for self-expression.

Because it's free. Especially with this assignment because I like to express what I have. It's awesome because the singing here- we're learning about other cultures. I love like going to other countries like and learning about what they do because I want to go out of my comfort zone to other countries to see what they do, and then bring it back.

Aisha emphasized that she felt free to be herself and felt respected by Ms. Miller: "It's not really the class itself, it's the teacher. Like I like Ms. Miller really because she's open. She's free, I mean, like I said, she's not strict. She's just like a real person with us."

Davion expressed what he liked about Ms. Miller's class: "I like the creativity. Like, we get to pick our own songs and stuff." When I asked Davion what he would change about the class, he said he would not change one thing. Luis and Kesha both

appreciated the ways in which they could be active in the class, both physically through movement and as active music-makers.

My favorite thing is that we don't have to just sit down and listen to a teacher talk. We get to get up and get active and um, we get to make our own songs, and we don't have to stick to the same topic all the time. Like if you want to go to a different country or another state or something where you can learn their music and then you won't feel like, well, I know nothing about this place at all. (Kesha)

I have multiple field notes that detail the ways in which movement in Ms. Miller's class seemed to dispel the need for "classroom management." For Luis, in particular, the opportunity to move in class helped him to focus.

I like this class. It's not like any other class. This is like the time where I just get that energy up, and it's like ... We don't just sit and learn stuff, we dance around and ... we do a lot of stuff.

When I spoke with Ms. Miller about teaching challenges, she never mentioned discipline or classroom management. Instead, she spoke about inconsistency being her biggest teaching challenge. Interestingly, she was most challenged by the lack of consistency amongst teachers and with curriculum rather than by student behavior.

Um. I mean I just think inconsistency. I mean it's ... not having a curriculum is good and bad. Um. And in a district this big that's, I mean, that's kind of going to happen. You have teachers who have different, various backgrounds and strengths and weaknesses and that's fine. Um. But when it is that broad then you know, it's always a challenge 'cause you never know who you are going to get or what kind of, what they know and what they don't or how they taught something one way.

### **Description of Vocal Teaching**

During my observations, as noted earlier, I was impressed with the ways in which Ms. Miller used her vocality, both in speaking and in singing, in ways that were relevant for the students. She spoke with the students in ways that were familiar to them, both in dialect and subject-matter. Most of the students were unable to articulate the ways in which her singing compared to their family members, but when I asked Jayla how Ms.



Miller's singing compared to the Gospel singing with which she was familiar, she emphatically declared, "She *sings* Gospel music! She sings music and sometimes she'll be singing it ... she'll be singing Gospel... pretty much sing ... well pretty much sing anything, all types of music that doesn't have cusses."

Jayla had spoken at length about her mother's traditional gospel singing when I asked her to describe music that was meaningful for her. When I asked her how Ms. Miller's voice compared to her mother's voice, she said "They sound exactly-- . . . no . . . Ms. Miller has more experience than my mom." I was impressed that she thought Ms. Miller's voice and her mother's voices were so similar. She seemed reluctant to say "exactly" so as not to be disrespectful of Ms. Miller's experience.

### **Vocal Profiles**

The third broad category is Student Vocal Profiles. I define a student's vocal profile broadly as the way in which her vocal models at home and school influence her vocal identity. More specifically, how do categories one – self-expression and identity, and music and family – and two – classroom vocal teaching – intersect to form a student's vocal esteem.

#### **Ms. Miller's Class**

A majority of students from Ms. Miller's class, regardless of whether they had vocal models at home, had positive vocal esteem. Kesha was one of the few who had family members at home who liked to sing. When I asked her if her mom liked to sing, she responded, "Yes. She went to karaoke last night!" Kesha spoke about how she did a lot of singing at home with both her mom and her sister. When I asked her whether she

was confident singing in front of people, she responded by saying, “I was singing on the bus this morning.” Kesha’s vocal esteem appeared to be influenced positively by vocal models at home—her mom and sister—and in her music classroom—Ms. Miller.

Luis, on the other hand, did not have parents or family members at home with whom he sang. He said, “I don’t usually sing.” When I asked him if his parents sang to him or if he heard them sing, he replied, “No. My mom doesn’t sing.” Despite not singing at home, Luis said, “I feel happy when I sing in here [Ms. Miller’s class] . . . Uh ... I like this class.”

Much like Luis, Aisha, did not have a vocal model at home. She lived with her single father and had not seen her mother in two years. When I asked her whether her father liked to sing, she responded bluntly, “He doesn’t like to sing.” I was surprised to hear this because Aisha appeared to be confident when she sang in class. She was the soloist in the group presentations I observed and was eager to sing for me in our interview. She also described a performing group she was in the process of starting with the support and help of Ms. Miller.

Me, my friends and some other people, there’s twelve people that know about this group I’m trying to start called “WGT.” It’s uh, stands for “we got talent.” And so, what it basically is like singing, dancing, acting and it’s for people that didn’t get to do stuff they wanted to. And so, my group allows them to do whatever they want and perform it and do stuff like that.

Despite not having family members with whom they sang, Luis and Aisha were both positively influenced by their vocal model at school.

When I spoke with Davion about singing, he assured me that he did not like to sing at home or at school despite the fact that he enjoyed Ms. Miller’s class. Although Davion admitted he did not like to sing, I heard him confidently rap in front of the class

many times, oftentimes with melodic content and always with vocal inflection. He, also, insisted on rapping for me in our interview. Throughout my observations of Ms. Miller's class, I was consistently impressed with the students' vocal confidence as they sang in front of each other and for the teacher.

### **Ms. Greene's Class**

In Ms. Greene's class, I found that students were hesitant to sing, even if they had strong vocal models at home. Matt described his voice at home and in music class as two different voices. In music class, he said his voice was, "not that loud and whenever I sing I go behind something because I don't want to get seen singing. I was always shy singing." At home, Matt sings country with his mom. When I asked him who he hears singing the most in his life, he said, "My mom. She sings country and sometimes I listen but most of the time I sing with her." When I asked him how he sang with his mom, he replied, "Just normally. Not soft or anything."

When I asked Precious, a confident and spunky fifth grader, whom she hears singing the most in her life, she replied, "um, me." As an active participant in the music ministry at her church and in a local children's choir, she expressed confidence in her singing voice. I asked her to describe her own singing voice as well as the singing that takes place in Ms. Greene's music class she replied, "Um, it kind of depends because sometimes if I'm like really happy, I sing super high, super loud, and super long. And if I'm kind of like sad, I kind of sing like soft sometimes." I then asked her to describe her singing in music class. She said it was,

just the way that it's supposed to be sung. If it's supposed to be like sung high, then high. Low, then low. Not loud. Not like, (demonstrates) dah-dah-dah-dah-dah (loud and smiling). I mean not too loud, not to the point where I can hear myself loud.

Although Precious did not express hesitation to sing in music class, much like Matt, she clearly delineated between the singing that took place in music class and the rest of the singing in her life. Similarly, Tamila, Mercy, Isabella, and Alma described rich singing experiences with which they were involved outside of school. Although they felt confident to sing in those settings, they felt inhibited to sing in music class.

Tamila, who actively participated in church music with her grandparents, and whose first musical memory was from church described how she sang in music class. She said, “I never really sing with my real voice.” When I asked her why she thought she did not use her real voice in music class, she replied, “I don’t want anyone really to hear my voice.”

Mercy, also felt confident when she sang in church and described her dad as a strong vocal model. When I asked her if she liked to sing she said, “It’s really easy for me to sing stuff.” However, when I asked her how she felt when she sang in music class, she quickly responded, “Yeah, well I don’t like to sing in front of other people because I get shy easily.”

Similarly, my multiple discussions with Isabella revealed her love of singing with her family and as mentioned before, when I asked her how she would feel if she were to sing Spanish and her dad’s type of music in music class. She said, “I would feel like I’m truly myself because my singing voice is kind of like...my voice. Um, my voice is...me! My style.” However, when I asked her how she feels when she sings in music class, her response was, “Hm. Like I’m kind of like the shy person when I sing it’s just like I get nervous! (laughs).”

As mentioned earlier, Alma described her rich tradition of singing and dancing with her family. This confidence, however, did not carry over into the music classroom. When I asked her to describe her own singing in the music classroom, she said, “I’m shy. I’d sing . . . But when I would sing, my face was red.”

### **If They Could Teach the Music Class, How Would They Teach?**

The final broad category deals with the students’ beliefs about what a meaningful music classroom might look like. Under this broad category, I found five sub-categories from their responses. The first two sub-categories are that the students value cultural plurality and autonomy. The third sub-category is that the students value the opportunity to express themselves. In the final two subcategories, the students discuss the need for encouragement and more diverse singing opportunities in the classroom.

#### **Students Value Cultural Plurality**

The students themselves value cultural plurality. They value their own music as well as the music of their peers. Their beliefs about a meaningful classroom is that all students’ voices and interests are recognized. When I asked Tamila how she would teach music, if she were the teacher, she had constructive and explicit directions for me:

Well first you start off introducing yourself. Say your name and what you like to do. And then you go around like in a circle saying what they like to do and stuff. And like what’s their favorite beat, what they like to sing and stuff, like what you’re doing to me right now, but don’t take this long because you got to get to everyone.

Throughout my interviews, I was impressed by the ways in which the students articulated the need for diversity in the music classroom. This included music that was meaningful for them, their peers, as well as music from other cultures. If he were the

teacher, Davion said, “I would do a little bit of everything. Like, some rap one day. Um, maybe like, go around the world and do like different songs.” When I asked Davion why he thought kids should take music class, he responded, “cultural reasons, instead of just sitting down and writing it on paper, learning about it. Similarly, Jayla and Aisha described what their classrooms would be like, if they were the music teacher.

Everybody can do what their favorite music is, like rap . . . like we could learn stuff in Africa and everything there, except I would choose somebody to like instead of me choosing them, I would probably let them have a little bit more freedom. (Jayla)

I would say, um, you know, do what Ms. Miller does. Go to different countries, do all that and you know just try to see what the students like instead of what you think is best. What you think is right. I mean, it’s always good to ask, have more than one idea for yourself and when the class comes, share your ideas with those, see which ones they like and see what they want to do. (Aisha)

In their interviews, both Precious and Isabella, at separate points, discussed ways in which a music teacher could incorporate each student’s voice to form a collective sound. Precious suggested,

Um, I think I might let the kids write their own songs, and I’d take different sections of the song and turn it into one big song. So, each person has their own point, and how they like to do it in their own mind.

Isabella had a similar suggestion:

When we sing altogether and when we start singing like a harmony, I like how all the different voices connect together and make a new sound. I like music like when it’s different and we pitch in everyone’s ideas like I would like if I was the teacher, I would sit everyone in a circle and I would pick each one person to pick a style they like. So, we can compose a song we all like and it’s everyone’s style.

Isabella emphasized joy. She said, “If I could change music at school or a different type of school. I would make it more joyful and meaningful and we would all sing it together.”

In addition, she also emphasized the importance of using music that is meaningful for the students: “So, I would make it like a harmony like we’re happy all together and like that

and I would like kids to listen to music that touches their heart and helps them understand lessons about life.”

### **Students Value Autonomy**

When I asked Jayla, if she were the music teacher, whether singing would be important for her, she replied, “It depends on what type of singing or if somebody wants to actually do the singing?” I then asked her what type of singing she thought was important for music teaching. She responded, “Um, anything that they choose. They get to choose. Well, they equally have to vote, and if they get mad at me, that’s a ‘them’ problem, not a ‘me’ problem.” In addition to autonomy being important for Jayla, she also talked about the ways in which the students can teach the teacher, if the music is unfamiliar.

Each vote obviously always going to be something that they know, I’d say, I don’t know none of this music-- you all teach me... because if somebody in the class wants to um ... wants to ... wants to be a music teacher, they have their chance to be a teacher. ... Like, I’d say, you teach me the lyrics.

Kesha and Mercy also expressed the importance of autonomy and repertoire as a means of garnering student interest. Mercy suggested, “You should listen to everybody’s ideas and have a vote to see which ones should be better and which ones you should use. Ideas for what kind of music to do and what kind of notes to use.” Kesha advised that teachers should, “make sure to ask your students what they want to do too because if they’re not interested then they’re not going to do anything.”

### **Students Value the Opportunity to Express Themselves**

In addition to the importance of cultural plurality and autonomy, the students expressed the importance of composition and creativity. They valued the opportunity to express themselves and to be imaginative and creative. Mercy suggested,

What I don't like is that sometimes I just want some free time on the instruments. We don't really get that. For half of the time, I would do something together and we have to work on something. The other half of the time, I would help them out with things and I would give them free time to explore.

Throughout all my discussions with Davion, he reiterated how much he valued the opportunity to compose and be creative. He suggested, "Maybe like have them make their own songs. Maybe like give them like, like ... when class is almost over maybe give them a little bit of free time to add some creativity."

### **Encouragement Over Discipline**

As part of the discussion about a meaningful music classroom, students expressed the need for encouragement, particularly when it came to singing confidence. Kesha suggested:

Well, I think the teacher who thinks that one of their students is not confident; if they want to help them get more confidence, they could like tell them "You sing good"....and "I think you should try harder" and just give them good encouraging words.

In addition to encouragement, many students discussed the ways in which a strict environment negatively impacted their confidence. As mentioned earlier, Aisha admitted that in Ms. Greene's class she, "was that one kid that really deliberately did everything the opposite of what she said" in reaction to the strict environment. When I observed Aisha in Ms. Miller's class, she was a leader and a positive influence on her peers. She



attributed the change in her character in music class to a less strict and more positive environment.

And then um, for being a teacher, just I mean, try to be positive. Don't bring up every negative thing that's ever happened. I mean, if that student or somebody is being disrespectful or something, hit 'em back with kindness. I mean they will probably do the same thing back.

Similarly, Precious described a music class environment which would be meaningful for her: "Let them have fun while they're singing. Let them be, let them have a big smile on their face or do a little dance around. Just let them be happy, be free."

### **More Singing (Low and Fast)**

When I asked Ms. Greene how much singing is typically done in Orff, she replied, "I think it depends on the teacher and the kids. There are some Orff teachers that don't really ever sing with their kids and there are some that sing even more than I do." She went on to explain that, "The fifth grade this year, kind of had the attitude that they don't want to sing."

My discussions with the fifth graders revealed that they in fact wanted to sing more. It seemed to them that they did very little singing in class. For example, when I asked Sarah what she would change if she could change one thing about her music class, she instantly replied, I love singing and I just wish we could do more ... I wish we had more time." I was surprised to hear that Destiny, a student who was often disciplined in music class and who frequently lost basketball and dance privileges because of her behavior in music class, had the same suggestion.

Emily: How much singing would you do?

Destiny: More. A lot of people don't like the singing in here (pause)

Emily: Do you think singing is important?

Destiny: Sometimes. It depends who's singing with them

Emily: Do you do much singing in this music class?

Destiny: No

A meaningful classroom, for Destiny would include singing. However, the nature of the singing was important. Similarly, Tamila and Kesha described the ways in which singing can be meaningful in a music classroom. They emphasized variety and diversity. Tamila said, "We'll do all kinds to get all of them, so everyone could get a chance." Kesha had similar suggestions:

I would ask them what do they want to sing about or what Ms. Miller does, basically, because Ms. Miller is the most fun music teacher I've had so far.

I think the best singing class, I think you would have to switch it up sometimes. Sometimes do like some fun activities that have to do with singing and other things too. And then sometimes just stay laid back and just do the regular singing stuff that regular teachers do.

In my discussions with students about a hypothetical music classroom in which they were the teacher, I was impressed with their comments about the specificities of singing in the music classroom. Surprisingly, many students emphasized singing range as something that was important to them. Both Precious and Lori emphasized range when I asked them how they would teach. Precious said, "Just well, just like, don't do songs that you know, go super high, and you pushing to do it more and over and over again. Do songs . . . that's fun and don't stress them out." Lori said she would have, "more singing . . . More of like, music that's low and fast." Tamila described the singing she would incorporate into her music class. As mentioned earlier, she said, "My song would be really long. A long note, but . . . truthful." When I asked her what kind of music she would use to show

“truthful,” she replied, “I’d be really be low. Or, kind of be like balancing high, have some highs and some lows in it.”

### **Summary**

This chapter provided the findings from the student and teacher interviews and classroom observations organized under four broad categories. Findings that demonstrated the role of music in students’ lives were presented under the first broad category. These included the ways in which music contributed to students’ self-expression and identity and the saliency of familial influence in students’ musical identities. The second broad category of findings demonstrated how the students perceived the two music teachers’ approaches to be diametrically opposite. The third broad category examined the intersection of the first and second broad categories, namely, how students’ musical selves, comprised of their musical identities and familial influence, intersected with their classroom vocal experience to form their vocal esteem. The fourth broad category consisted of students’ conceptions of a hypothetical music classroom that would be meaningful for them.

## V – REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

My dissertation journey has allowed me to recognize the power of qualitative research methods. I became acutely aware of the unexpected complexities that can come about when we allow the process to unfold without ascribing preconceived conclusions. Throughout the process I have sought to maintain the children's voices and best interest at the forefront of my research decisions. As I began the analysis for my discussion, I realized that my literature review was not sufficient to address the complexities and nuances of the two music classrooms. Creswell (2013) states,

In the entire qualitative research process the researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from the literature. (p. 47)

Creswell's statement, as well as Clarke and Parsons's (2013) discussion about, "becoming rhizome researchers," inspired me to approach my analysis creatively and rhizomatically (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Clarke and Parsons describe, "rhizome researchers" as those who,

Recognize their embeddedness, allow research to lead them, accept that attempts to synthesize are never finished, listen to those before them and on the margins, and give themselves to a life of becoming, thus "breaking" the binaries that can capture or stifle their attempts to be educational researchers constructing symbolic selves. (p. 35)

My synthesis in Chapters VI and VII are an extension and expansion of my literature review in Chapter II. Rather than amend the literature review that I conducted prior to data collection, I have incorporated new literature in Chapters VI and VII that further illuminate the findings from this study. By viewing this study rhizomatically, the

content in Chapter II is a valuable representation of the ways in which I initially framed this study. The analysis of the findings, however, required a literature expansion to better understand the students' and teachers' realities. Clarke and Parsons (2013) conceptualize rhizome researchers as, "nomads [who] are open to interrelationships of what is before them, even if these interrelationships present places and concepts not traditionally linked" (p. 39). I found myself "traveling" to unknown yet exciting territory and in doing so, I was better able to account for the complexities of my findings. The common thread that has tied my study together from beginning to end has been my commitment to the students, their voices, their understanding of the world and to finding the best way in which their voices can be heard. Clarke and Parsons write,

Researchers should be aware of those on the fringe and come to see "all" those being researched and "all" the information being gathered, including disparate elements that seem out of line with preconceived notions. Rhizome researchers can problematize the status quo to ask hard questions about what is happening that deflate educational hegemonies. (Clarke & Parsons, 2013, p. 40)

A literature expansion in my study, rather than an amendment of my initial literature review, accounts for the impact the findings had on my preconceived framework. By expanding the framework and *my* epistemic horizons, I was better able to "problematize the status quo" and the ways in which hegemonic music practices manifested in the lives of these students. More specifically, four categories of literature informed my analysis of the findings and allowed for an expanded framework. They are the following and will be incorporated in Chapters VI and VII:

1. Classroom management: (Gay, 2011; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Milner & Tenore, 2010; Monroe & Obidah, 2004)

2. Theory and philosophy: (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Paraskeva, 2017; Quantz, 2011)
3. Coloniality and decolonization: (Calderon, 2011; Calderon, 2014; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Patel, 2016)
4. Non-Western epistemologies: (Asante, 2011; Kubow & Min, 2016; Mbembe, 2016; Merriam & Kim, 2008; Thiong'o, 2013)

To reemphasize Clarke and Parson's (2013) description of a rhizome researcher, this approach, although maybe unconventional, has allowed me to embrace the, "becoming" (p.35) of research, its unpredictabilities and uncertainties interspersed with the joy of providing a space in which students' voices can be heard.

## VI – DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how two groups of adolescent music students from a diverse urban public school perceive the singing and the music teaching in their general music classrooms. By discovering fifth- and sixth-grade students' perspectives, I hoped to shed light on the ways in which vocal teaching affected their musical, vocal, and cultural identities, particularly during the malleable time of adolescence. To carry out the purpose of this study, over the course of three months, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 students and two teachers as well as twice-weekly observations of both classrooms. The school at which I conducted my research is in an area with a poverty rate of 21.3% which is 6.5% higher than the national average (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014).

Of the student participants, seven were African American, two were from Honduran or Honduran-Mexican immigrant families, one was Latino, one was from an Eritrean immigrant family and three had European heritage. The two teachers were white women in their mid-thirties with similar educational backgrounds. The interview data and field notes from the observations were coded, organized, and analyzed into categories and subcategories based upon the following research questions:

1. How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background?
2. How do they describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class?

### 3. How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher?

These three research questions were largely answered by the findings which I presented in Chapter IV. In Chapter IV, I presented the findings from the interviews and observations in categories that best represented the research in a narrative format. The overarching theme that emerged from this study is the following:

- The congruence or incongruence of a teacher's musical epistemology—“the norms, logic, values, and way of knowing” (Domínguez, 2017, p. 233) music—with the musical epistemologies of her students was the primary reason for student exclusion or empowerment in the classroom.

This theme will be further analyzed and discussed in this chapter under the two broad categories of Ms. Greene's and Ms. Miller's classrooms. The following discussion will synthesize findings from Chapter IV, related literature from Chapter II, as well as additional literature to address the emergent themes from the study.

### **Musical Epistemology**

Based on Paris' (2012) conception of *culturally sustaining pedagogy*, this study has sought to expand upon previous research in culturally relevant and responsive music education (Fitzpatrick, 2012; Lind & McKoy, 2016; Shaw, 2014) as a means to discover the nuances beyond curriculum and repertoire that contribute to the continued cycle of exclusion within the field of music education. By looking specifically at the ways singing and beliefs about the singing body were communicated to students in the general music classroom, I discovered the subtle ways in which a Eurocentric musical epistemology invisibly defines all aspects of the classroom. Although cultural relevance has been explored in musical repertoire and curriculum, the nuances of pedagogy, classroom discipline, beliefs about music and singing as they relate to race and world



view in the music classroom remain to be fully dismantled. Scholars, who have explored issues of race and racism within the field of music education (Bradley, 2015; Gustafson, 2009; Hess, 2015; Koza, 2008) agree upon the need to “call out” and “name” the injustices that continue to take place in music classrooms. Drawing from their work as well as scholars from the fields of education, educational policy, urban education, Afrocentrism, and Indigenous studies (Asante, 2011; Calderon, 2014; Domínguez, 2017; Gay, 2011; Mbembe, 2016; Milner & Tenore, 2010; Paraskeva, 2017; Patel, 2016; Quantz, 2011), this chapter aims to situate the two music classrooms from this study, based on student and teacher interviews and classroom observations, within discourses of coloniality, racism, epistemology, ritual and pedagogical nuance as a means of uncovering the ideology that allows for perpetuated racism within the field of music education.

### **Incongruent Musical Epistemology**

#### **Coloniality**

The discourse, approach, and method Ms. Greene employed in her music classroom are largely representative of the current approach in music teacher education and K-12 music classrooms in the United States. Although the interests of her students were different from previous institutions at which she taught, Ms. Greene remained committed to the same music education discourses. She states, “I still do the same things I did at the private catholic school.” These discourses specify methods, standards, pedagogy, singing, posture, repertoire, and classroom management that are based on a Eurocentric musical epistemology and deeply situated in a white, colonist world view (Gustafson, 2009; Hess, 2015). Although Ms. Greene certainly was not purposefully

enacting a white supremacist ideology in her classroom, the normative music education practices to which she attended allowed for the perpetuation of this ideology and the simultaneous silencing of her students.

The examination of racist, normalized ideology within American education is not new. Theoretical and practical conceptions of social justice in education have attempted to attend to educational inequality (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). More often than not, these attempts have reinstated the status quo because they were framed within the same Eurocentric paradigm. More specifically, “we continue to promote systems that claim justice and equity but remain firmly rooted in a framework of coloniality” (Domínguez, 2017, p. 229). *Coloniality*, defined by Maldonado-Torres (2007),

is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breath coloniality all the time and every day. (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243)

The normalized values and assumptions found in music education are tied to racist and colonial histories. These assumptions are perpetuated because of *colonial-blind*, (Calderon, 2011) *color-blind*, (Benedict, 2009; Bradley, 2015;) and *universalist* (Gould, 2012; Gustafson, 2009) beliefs that Western classical music and the performance practices, aesthetics, and values with which it is associated can transcend differences of race, culture, and worldview. The assumption that Western classical music is universally appropriate is rooted in colonialist discourses of the “cultured” and “uncultured” and

“high” and “low” art. These discourses of “superiority” emphasize what is appropriate and therefore worthy of being included in the music classroom.

The students in Ms. Greene’s class had accepted that their musical epistemologies were “inappropriate” for the music classroom. This was evident based upon how they described their music as “different” from the music in music class. Alma noted that, “Well, in music class and ... Home, it’s like a different culture.” According to Isabella, “In my house the song is more like love, family and things like that. But my house I don’t know how to explain it but it’s really different [from school].”

The students used the word “different” to describe the ways in which movement was absent from their music classroom experience compared to their home musical experience. Precious compared her home music to that of the music classroom: “I mean, it’ll kind of be different from the songs from like the normal songs we sing [in music class], ‘cause it kind of like, it kind of has a beat a little bit.” Mercy emphasized that the singing in the classroom was, “pretty different to the singing at home. The music at home is more upbeat and it’s easier to dance to. The one in Miss Greene’s, it’s more just to listen to. You can’t really dance to it.”

The implicit message the students’ internalized, based upon the absence of their own musical epistemologies in the music classroom, was that their musical epistemologies were inappropriate for this particular music setting. Gustafson (2009) attempts to unravel the hegemonic justification of racist discourses of appropriateness and superiority. She provides an historical analysis of racist music education practices that continue to shape contemporary discourses:

I have attempted to focus on racial incitements that underpin how one is supposed to think about music, learn it, listen to it, and perform it. Although these

are presented as pedagogically *necessary* to participation, they are merely prescriptive of what has been heard and seen as racially specific to fabricated qualities of whiteness. (Gustafson, 2009, p. 201)

Gustafson's analysis was largely prompted by her recognition of the high attrition rate of African American students in music programs and her observations of the ways African American children were alienated in elementary music classrooms. To uncover the deeply entrenched belief system from which today's music education practices stem, she, "reject[ed] the idea that schools and teachers were the root of the problem" and instead, "focused on comparisons of motion, speech, and singing that made one child's entrainment superior to another's. "From this perspective, [she] was able to trace a web of aesthetic and social values in the curriculum that activate a biography of the child and an index of her (dis) qualifications as citizen" (Gustafson, 2009, p. 200).

Gustafson's (2009) emphasis on the historical, social, and aesthetic "web" of ideology underpinning music education practices is comparable to Patel's (2016) call for a decolonization of educational policies and analyses that perpetuate racism within the field of educational policy. Much like Gustafson, she is interested in a radical unveiling and dismantling of systemic oppressive by countering the ways in which imperialist discourses protect whiteness. One example she provides is the way in which dominant discourses allow for the segmentation of larger oppressive systems, and in doing so, trivialize or deemphasize the harm suffered. "[They] work[s] to address instances of wrongdoing as just that, instances, rather than an intertwined set of structures that ensure inequity, injustice, and suffering that, in turn, subsidize the well-being of others" (Patel, 2016, p. 123).

Gustafson (2009) and Patel (2016) address the complexity of educational inequality by attending to sociocultural, historical, contemporary, and epistemic factors. Gustafson asserts that “abandoning the historic role played by race in music would duplicate denial of its alliance with notions of whiteness” (Gustafson, 2009, p.124). It is with this same reasoning that I frame the discussion about Ms. Greene’s teaching. To discuss her teaching merely within the framework of culturally relevant or congruent pedagogy would dismiss the broader, historical, and epistemological context that has influenced and framed her teaching. Normative discourses within the field of music teacher education about method, standards, behavior, and musical aptitude have influenced the way Ms. Greene approaches her teaching. Her method and pedagogy were largely emblematic of those discourses.

### **Method Without Reflection**

For Ms. Greene, her Orff training provided a sense of security and systemization that she did not receive in her college training. When comparing her experiences in different educational settings—private and public—and with students from different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, she said

I still do the same things I did at the private catholic school. The fifth graders at the private catholic school seemed a little more innocent than here. Here, if they don’t like something they have no problem expressing it.

Despite recognizing that her current students have, “different interests” she assumed the universality of her methods rather than considering the context in which she was teaching. In addition to viewing her music teaching methods as universal, she also viewed her students’ behavior and lack of innocence as indicative of a cultural deficiency rather than a reaction to her teaching. She said, “I don’t know, it’s a different culture. . .

(pause). You can tell there's not a whole lot of discipline at home. Because parents say they don't act like that at home, but you know, they do the same thing everywhere."

Ms. Greene prioritized her method over the interests of her students. For Allsup and Westerlund (2012), this is indicative of

an ethical crisis . . . in music teacher preparation and music education methodologies when in the process of securing ends against the uncertainties of change, creative or imaginative options are foreclosed or limited. (p. 127)

In addition, Allsup and Westerlund emphasize that, "a fixed methodological view secures that the teacher need not reflect between choices, or that the reflection takes place within a fixed range of decisions" (p. 136). Prescriptive methods allow teachers to maintain universal and "color blind" assumptions about music, culture, and what is best for their students. Because these methods require little attention to students' interests, musical world views, and cultures, teachers are able to "perform" as teachers without more than a superficial engagement with their students. The lack of engagement between teacher and student allows for an, "*ontological distance*" (Domínguez, 2017, p. 228) and alienation in the music classroom.

In his discussion about decolonial teacher education, Domínguez (2017), asserts that the ontological distance between teachers and students of color contributes to the perpetuation of coloniality in education:

In education, ontological distance refers to the vast, affective terrain . . . between the practices, knowledges, and goals that are recognized in schools and beyond as valid and normative . . . and an evolving multitude of others . . . present and vivid in the lives of youth of color . . . that at least at present, continue to be denied institutional validity. (Domínguez, 2017, p. 228).

Others in the field of music education have recognized the ways in which prescriptive music methods contribute to a distancing between student and teacher and to alienation in

the classroom (Benedict, 2009; Hess, 2015). Students are alienated from teachers and teachers,

who presume to own the mode of production, are in reality alienated from the educative process as they are, in reality, handmaidens to a discourse of normative and commonsense social production of what counts as knowledge and unfortunately, in many cases, what counts as music. (Benedict, 2009, p. 219)

Therefore, although Ms. Greene used her methods as a means of controlling what seemed to her as uncontrollable students, in doing so, she in fact was abdicating her own agency as a teacher and musician. In addition, Benedict (2009) posits that, “the implementation of these methods in a strict and unmindful manner, often alienates both teacher and student from musicking” (p. 217). A systematic implementation of traditional music teaching methods, rooted in a Eurocentric musical epistemology, created distance between Ms. Greene and her students and alienated them from meaningful music-making.

Ms. Greene’s use of pre-programmed curriculum and lesson plans absolved her from acquainting herself with her students and their musical interests. The distance between Ms. Greene’s assumptions about her students and their lived realities quickly became apparent in my interviews. One example was Ms. Greene’s assertion that her students did not want to sing: “The fifth grade this year, kind of had the attitude that they don’t want to sing.” Subsequent interviews with students revealed that they in fact wanted *more* singing in the classroom. The lack of understanding and communication between Ms. Greene and her students was apparent but very little was done to close the distance and better understand the students’ perspectives.

The harm created by an ontological distance between teacher and student is that it allows the teacher to “other” the student—to ignore the student’s humanity. Most

importantly, ontological distance relieves teachers from empathic engagement with their students. In the following section, I will expound upon the ways in which the ontological distance, created by the systematic use of Eurocentric methods, manifested in Ms. Greene's classroom as an objective racialization and disciplining of bodies.

### **Cultural Nobility and Racialized Bodies**

Embedded within traditional American music teaching curriculum are Western classical aesthetics and values which delineate acceptable ways of receiving and making music. Historically, the emphasis on “pure” head voice and the quiet listener, both in body and in voice allowed for the racialization and marginalization of students of color in music classrooms (Gustafson, 2009). “The fabrication of the worthy versus the abject student in music instruction comes to a great extent, from racist thinking” (Gustafson, 2009, p. 124). Historically, colonialist beliefs about vocal and musical inferiority, tied to a European bourgeois world view, justified the use of vocal teaching to discipline and control the colonized (Olwage, 2004). Much of the colonialist discourse was rooted in an antagonism between the “civilized” and the “savage other.” Gustafson (2009) notes that, “the fabrication of whiteness as cultural nobility is relevant to our understanding of the present situation . . . the uncanny resemblances between academic and musical exclusion centuries ago and the template for worthy participation in music instruction today” (p. 171). Gustafson emphasizes particular ways in which children are excluded from music classrooms. Interestingly, the exclusion occurs on the epistemological level. When children's musical epistemology—their musical way of knowing and being—conflicts with the normalized musical epistemology in classrooms and teacher education programs, they are silenced.



In my observations and discussions with Ms. Greene's students, I recognized the ways in which their voices and bodies were judged based upon Eurocentric criteria. For Gustafson, these criteria relate to a racialized entrainment and singing voice. Gustafson uses the word *entrainment*, "the way we react to music, with reference to the interaction of sound, memory, body, motions, and gestures" (p. xii), as a means of comparing Eurocentric and African American embodied responses to music. She states,

Contemplating our own, or another's entrainment lets us into a world structured by cultural history and one that has its own intimate meanings. As individuals watch others, they interpret motions as familiar or strange, either like their own values or different from them. (p.xii)

Within a Eurocentric musical Epistemology, the experience of listening to music is one in which the mind and body are separated, whereas, within African American and many non-white traditions, music listening cannot be divorced from the body. Ms. Greene's training in a Eurocentric musical epistemology meant that while listening to music or singing, she expected students to have, "hands down, touch your legs . . . singing posture, sitting on pockets, legs are down flat, back is nice and straight and tall." Notes like these about body stillness and containment are consistent throughout my fieldnotes. There was little or no opportunity for children to experience music with their bodies. Although, Ms. Greene emphasized the values of movement within the Orff method, movement within this paradigm is defined as clapping, snapping, or slapping one's legs. Orff body percussion, ironically, is one in which the student is in fact separated from his body. Rather than allowing students' listening experiences to be an opportunity for personal entrainment, students are prescribed body percussion patterns or mandated to sit quietly and listen. The music classroom is therefore racialized, where white values of music listening are normalized. Students of color are denied the

opportunity to experience music in ways that are epistemologically congruent, or worse, they are punished when they experience music in ways unfamiliar to a Eurocentric musical epistemology. Throughout my observations of Ms. Greene's class, I recognized a restless energy in students' bodies, boiling under the surface. Sometimes it would boil over, and the student would be punished for body movement or talking that were outside of the confines of acceptable listening.

Among historical discourses that formed the approach to musical entrainment within a Eurocentric musical epistemology were

European concert protocols . . . Educators urged music teachers to emulate this form of listening in the classroom by discarding sentimentality . . . This ethos congealed in music appreciation so that control over any kind of rhythmic entrainment was positioned against the chaos that would otherwise erupt. (Gustafson, 2009, p. 162)

Chaos was associated with the primitive and savage, whereas reason and refinement could engender nobility. Contemporary descriptions of musically apt students include the words appropriate, proper, and standard. One example in a music education publication suggested the "proper" application of clapping in the classroom:

Hold one hand stationary (like a drum) and "clap" it with the other hand using only a little controlled wrist and forearm movement. Avoid large movements from the shoulders and moving of both hands. (Regelski, 2004, p. 96).

This example, emphasized by Gustafson, is emblematic of language used in music education literature and curriculum that normalize white-centric values of musical disposition and comportment. As stated earlier, Gustafson describes the process of assessing another person's musical disposition as. "interpret[ing] motions as familiar or strange" (p.xii). Educators who view students' entrainment based on Eurocentric musical values are likely to view musical embodiment as, "strange." Put another way, "because

music educators are so familiar with present regulation of listening as the norm, its recognition of motionless and silent nobility seems to be a standard of universal value” (Gustafson, 2009, p. 163).

Ways of knowing and experiencing music are universalized within any musical paradigm. Within American music education, a Eurocentric musical epistemology informs teachers’ assessing and disciplining of students’ musical bodies,

resulting in the lack of recognition of acculturated musical interests of many African American students. Musical inequity being closely allied to embodied values and identity, is taken personally. (Gustafson, 2009, p. 147)

### **Musical Entrainment and Musical Epistemology**

Upon re-visiting the literature while simultaneously reviewing the findings from Chapter IV for this discussion, it quickly became evident how important musical entrainment was for these students. In our interviews, students emphasized musical entrainment in discussions about their family and musical background (RQ #1), when they spoke about Ms. Greene’s teaching (RQ #2), and when they described the ways they would teach a music class (RQ #3). Their descriptions of embodied musical engagement took the form of, “dancing,” “beats,” and, “fast.” I was able to deduce these meanings based upon the contexts in which they were mentioned and their juxtaposition of these descriptions with their descriptions of Ms. Greene’s, “strict,” “high” and “slow” teaching.

The saliency of musical entrainment in students’ musical epistemologies is apparent in the multiple ways it was discussed in response to different questions. I have organized some of the findings under the research questions to demonstrate this phenomenon.

**RQ 1: How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background?**

I express myself with singing. Music for me I mean, it just expresses who I am. And music entertains and can get us to start dancing. (Aisha)

I be dancing and singing bachata with my mom ... Um, I didn't learn it, it's in my blood. (Alma)

I'm in the church choir with my friends. It's like Christian music that we do for Jesus and all the things from the Bible. We use drums to help us keeping the beat. (Mercy)

I mean, it'll kind of be different from the songs from like the normal songs we sing [in music class], 'cause it kind of like, it kind of has a beat a little bit. (Precious)

It's pretty different to the singing at home. The music at home is more upbeat and it's easier to dance to . . . (Mercy)

The students considered dancing and the “beat” to be important components of their musical expression. Additionally, all the above quotations include both the body entrainment as well as the singing voice. It became apparent to me that the singing voice, for these students, could not be separated from the body. This conception of the “singing body” carries an important epistemological meaning for the students’ vocal identities as well as for me, the researcher, mostly situated within a Eurocentric musical epistemology and will be further elaborated in the following subsection.

**RQ 2: How do they describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class?**

It's pretty different to the singing at home. The music at home is more upbeat and it's easier to dance to. The one in Ms. Greene's, it's more just to listen to. You can't really dance to it. (Mercy)

Mercy's comparison of singing in Ms. Greene's class and the singing at home emphasizes Gustafson's (2009) point. For Mercy, the music (singing) in Ms. Greene's

class was meant to be listened to with a still body, whereas, the music (singing) at home was expressed with the body. In the music classroom, Gustafson (2009) notes, “The good ear is recognizable as the listener who paid attention to rhythmic detail but made no indication of it” (p. 153). Mercy’s delineation between music embodiment (or lack thereof) inside the classroom and out indicates that she internalized this normative discourse about musical entrainment. Her musical epistemology—the way she knew, embodied, and experienced music—was not “appropriate” for the music classroom. The “appropriate” way to experience music in Ms. Greene’s classroom was one in which the body and mind were separated.

Luis, Aisha, and Kesha described Ms. Greene’s teaching in light of what they were currently experiencing with Ms. Miller. Luis, who I observed frequently dancing throughout Ms. Miller’s classroom described Ms. Greene’s class.

In Ms. Greene’s class, we would just, like, sit. I mean, we would move, but like ... Not like we do in this class. Most of the time we’d just get like, rhythm sticks, and then that’s all we would do.

For Luis, musical entrainment was not possible in Ms. Greene’s class. According to Luis, “rhythm sticks” were the extent of musical embodiment in Ms. Greene’s class. Luis’s observation matches Gustafson’s (2009). In her classroom observations, Gustafson observed the ways in which teachers used clapping and percussion instruments.

Whenever students were asked to mark rhythm by clapping or playing percussion instruments. What I came to recognize was the highly disciplined aspects of two traditions in those classrooms. There is the traditional Western split between body and mind. Within the musical culture called black or African American, the body is the mediator and an inextricable part of what music is and what musical thinking is. (Gustafson, 2009, p. xiv)

Clapping and percussion instruments, both salient for non-Eurocentric musical epistemologies are appropriated in the music classroom under the guise of providing students with an opportunity to move. Instead, they function as a means of further controlling students' musical entrainment.

Aisha and Kesha described the strict singing posture in Ms. Greene's class as the antithesis to their freedom to dance and embody the music in Ms. Miller's class.

But before in Ms. Greene's class, I mean, it was just strict. Like, straight up strict- right posture, and all that stuff.

In Ms. Miller's classroom:

It's not really the class itself, it's the teacher. Like I like Ms. Miller really because she's open. She's free, I mean, like I said, she's not strict. She's just like a real person with us. (Aisha)

In Ms. Greene's classroom:

She would tell us to like, sing with a golf, like we had a golf ball in our mouth, and we'd have to sit up straight and work on good singing posture. (Kesha)

In Ms. Miller's classroom:

My favorite thing is that we don't have to just sit down and listen to a teacher talk. We get to get up and get active and um, we get to make our own songs, and we don't have to stick to the same topic all the time.

Proper posture was synonymous with containment. Musical entrainment was not possible when a passive, silent posture was enforced.

### **RQ 3: How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher?**

As mentioned in Chapter IV, students described a meaningful music classroom as one in which cultural plurality and diversity were celebrated. For Tamila, the encouragement of a culturally pluralistic music classroom accounted for each individual's musical entrainment, or the way in which she embodied music.

And then you go around like in a circle saying what they like to do and stuff.  
And like what's their favorite beat. . . (Tamila)

Lori emphasized the need for more music in the music classroom that could be embodied.

More of like, music that's low and fast. (Lori)

The importance of musical entrainment—a complete, unsegmented embodiment of music—for Ms. Greene's and Ms. Miller's students was apparent in my observations, as noted in Chapter IV, “their whole bodies seemed to yearn to dance when they clapped the rhythmic patterns or repeated the body percussion sequence,” and in the interviews, where musical embodiment was relevant in all discussions about music.

### **The Singing Body**

Music curriculum and pedagogy based on a Eurocentric musical epistemology partitions music learning into the elements of music—harmony, melody, rhythm, among others—which can be separately studied. Western classical vocal pedagogy similarly identifies separate categories, such as posture, breath, and onset, with which to understand the *bel canto* singing technique. This approach to teaching, although seemingly unproblematic within a Eurocentric epistemology, assumes that the parts can be separated from the whole. Within a Eurocentric paradigm, one experiences music cognitively without body movement. Within a Eurocentric paradigm, one sings without the need for overt body gesturing. These undisputed ways of singing and experiencing music are in direct opposition to non-Western musical epistemologies. According to Merriam and Kim (2008),

If there's anything that non-Western systems of learning and knowing have in common, it's the notion that learning involves not only the mind but the body, the spirit, and the emotions. There is no separation of the mind from the rest of our being. (p. 76)

The student's perceptions of singing and the music-learning in Ms. Greene's classroom illuminated the ways in which a Eurocentric musical epistemology was hindering *my* understanding of their experiences. I realized I was framing the notion of a, "silenced singer" within a Eurocentric framework where the singing voice is divorced from the singing body. For these students, however, to be a silenced singer was to in fact have the singing *body* be silenced. The singing body and singing voice were inseparable.

Gustafson (2009) sheds light on the ways in which discourses about body entrainment and head tone have manifested in the elementary music classroom.

Historically, she notes,

Operatic singing stressed the subdued demeanor of the body's upper half. At the other end of the continuum, slave songs included pitch variance, extroverted body accentuation, and gestures viewed as foreign compared to the *bel canto* art that was embraced as native to American singing. (p. 128)

Historically, musical embodiment was in direct opposition to the, "subdued" aesthetics of *bel canto* singing. The use of "head voice" in elementary music teacher education and the, "concentration on the upper body" allows for the, "discouragement of rhythmic gesturing or bodily accentuation of any kind" (Gustafson, 2009, p. 129). Robinson-Martin (2017) notes that in,

Singing genres outside of classical art music . . . the vocal quality most often used is the "Belt" vocal quality. The belt quality is not only different from vocal qualities found in classical in terms of timbre but is also different in terms of its physical production. (p. 45)

While Robinson-Martin (2017) focuses on the anatomical physicality (embodiment) of a belt vocal sound, Gustafson (2009), from a socio-historic perspective, shows how the physical embodiment of belting—found in non-*bel canto* singing styles—is juxtaposed with the aesthetics of head tone dominant singing: "The definition of belting for some is



vocal production that comes from below the neck. The ‘cultured’ style of singing emphasizes restraint and polish that downplays the chest and vocal folds” (Gustafson, 2009, p. 129). Although the use of the head voice, in itself, is unproblematic, it is the entanglement of the racialized historical ideology—refined white voice versus harsh black voice—with normalized pedagogical approaches—pure head tone, still body—that allows for the continued alienation of students in music classrooms.

Throughout my observations and student interviews, I came to realize that the singing culture emphasized in Ms. Greene’s class and normalized in music teacher education was in direct opposition to many of these students’ musical epistemologies. Robinson-Martin (2017) emphasizes the, “vocal sounds and colors most commonly found in music outside of the classical art music . . . [are] more closely related to that of vernacular or colloquial speech” (p. 45). The emphasis on speech, both in articulation and range, requires more of a chest-heavy or mixed vocal register. The students noted that the singing in Ms. Greene’s class was higher than what they were accustomed to. Based on my observations, I was able to surmise that their description of high singing was related to the use of the head voice register. Additionally, Ms. Greene confirmed that, “I try to get them to get into their head voice instead of the speaking talking voice.”

The use of head voice and “proper” singing posture in Ms. Greene’s classroom were inextricably linked. “Proper” singing posture consisted of a still body and was described by students as being “strict.” This was in opposition to students’ descriptions of their own singing which was inseparable from movement. This embodiment of singing—or the singing body—is antithetical to the passive posture and isolated singing voice in the music classroom. Robinson-Martin (2017) describes the black musical

tradition as a, “complete intertwining of black music and dance” (p. 4). For Mercy, from an African tradition, and Precious, from an African-American tradition, the singing experience in the music classroom was foreign to their conception of singing.

It’s pretty different to the singing at home. The music at home is more upbeat and it’s easier to dance to. The one in Ms. Greene’s, it’s more just to listen to. You can’t really dance to it. (Mercy)

I mean, it’ll kind of be different from the songs from like the normal songs we sing [in music class], ‘cause it kind of like, it kind of has a beat a little bit. (Precious)

Because of the disconnect between the ways they experienced singing and home and at school, I discovered that students who had vibrant singing lives outside of school and for whom singing was important, were “inhibited singers” in the music classroom. Many described a shyness they only felt in the music classroom. Mercy, an enthusiastic participant in her church choir who stated, “It’s really easy for me to sing stuff,” felt inhibited when singing in the music classroom. As mentioned above, the way she described the singing at school was that, “it’s more just to listen to. You can’t really dance to it.” The separation of singing from movement in the music classroom seemed to contribute to Mercy’s hesitancy and inhibition in the music classroom. This was also the case for Alma for whom singing at home was inseparable from dancing. School music, however, she said, “in music class and ... Home, it’s like a different culture.” She also felt inhibited to sing at school.

Tamila, also an active church choir member, described her ideal singing to me. She first emphasized a low singing voice and then proceeded to include both high and low: “I’d be really be low. Or, kind of be like balancing high, have some highs and some lows in it.” Tamila felt inhibited to sing in the music classroom. She said, “I never really

sing with my real voice.” Similarly, Isabella emphasized her perception of pitch in the music classroom, “well, it’s really different because right here [music class] we do like a lot of high pitch things.” Although singing was an important family activity for Isabella, she too felt inhibited to sing in school. Although Tamila and Isabella did not articulate the use of the head voice in music class as the culprit of their inhibition, they both emphasized pitch in relation to their comfort with music.

As I re-examined the findings from the students’ interviews, I was confronted with this notion of, “unvoiced speech” (Quantz, 2011). The students had clearly expressed a disconnect between Ms. Greene’s teaching and the ways in which they experienced music outside of school. I was troubled with the notion that many of them felt inhibited to sing in the music classroom despite feeling confident to sing in their daily lives. In his critique of rituals—“those nonrational areas that we rarely think about or plan” (Quantz, 2011, p. 8) in school settings (which I have called “nuances”)—to uncover “the ritual patterns that might be found in classrooms that work to reproduce privilege and the status quo” (p. 15), Quantz discusses “unvoiced speech” (p. 64.). He suggests that, “one must compare outward speech to inward speech and look for the contradictions of the moment . . . [to] help lay bare the hegemonic workings of the dominant ideologies” (p. 64).

The students were able to articulate the ways in which the music teaching was “different” from what they knew. However, despite their dislike of the music experience, they had accepted that this was the way one experienced music in school. School music values, rooted in colonialism and European bourgeois ideals, delineate the “appropriate” way to listen to music, experience music, and make music. Although these values

clashed with the students' own musical "ways of knowing," they had accepted them as the dominant discourse. Gustafson (2009) observed the, "injury to the embodied musical experience most meaningful to many children" (p. 196) that took place because of this dominant discourse. The "unvoiced speech" of Ms. Greene's students that could, "help lay bare the hegemonic workings of the dominant ideologies" was in their nonverbal embodiment of inhibition, reluctance, dislike, and resistance to participating in the music classroom. Their acceptance of the dominant musical epistemology allowed for their own musical epistemologies to be silenced. Although I am cautious about speaking for these children, my observations of the music classroom allowed me to see the ways in which the students were alienated. In addition, Ms. Miller's students were able to critically examine their past experience in Ms. Greene's class because they had experienced a different musical epistemology in Ms. Miller's class. Their insight coupled with my observations allowed me to further investigate the ways in which the music teaching had impacted Ms. Greene's students.

Gustafson (2009) states, "he or she finds it very onerous to become intimate with that which is antithetical to his or her core" (p. 196). For many of Ms. Greene's students, the musical epistemology in the classroom was, "antithetical to [their] core" and caused them to feel alienated. Some students, like Alma, Isabella, Mercy and Tamila responded to this alienation by retreating, thus feeling inhibited in their musical expression. Others responded to the alienation by reacting and thus subjecting themselves to discipline. Aisha, admitted that she responded to Ms. Greene's teaching in that way. Although she was a leader in Ms. Miller's class, her behavior in Ms. Greene's class was the opposite.

It seemed like if I was to be myself, I'd be wrong. That was a problem. So, I didn't really do everything, like . . . I was that one kid that really deliberately did everything the opposite of what she said.

Ms. Greene's uniform approach to musical methods and pedagogy, all based on a Eurocentric musical epistemology, alienated her students. Gustafson (2009) observed similar music classrooms "that delivered a rejection of the child's disposition (p. 196)" and she suggests that, "the defense of culture by withdrawal is a reasonable response in the face of perceived threat" (p. 196). For students like Aisha, their, "defense of culture" was deliberate opposition. It was this dynamic between Ms. Greene and her students that I frequently observed—the enforcement of that which was antithetical to the students and their subsequent reaction. Because of this dynamic and the alienation of teacher and students alike, "classroom management" and discipline were the overwhelming focus in the classroom.

### **Classroom Management**

For Ms. Greene, classroom management consisted of disciplinary action to penalize students who did not behave in the manner she expected. During my observations, I noted the prioritization of discipline to the point where it was all-consuming. Ms. Greene spent more time taking disciplinary action than she did making music. As noted in Chapter IV, I found her expectations for classroom behavior to be vague and found her reaction to students' movement or occasional talking to be severe and unrealistic. As the semester progressed, the students' behavior worsened in response to little musical engagement and strict behavioral expectations. I used the term, "downward spiral" to describe the ways in which Ms. Greene's inattention to the needs of

her students, both physically and musically, manifested in student misbehavior and opposition.

Watch the typical classroom and watch all of the ways that students are reminded that they have little status, that their ideas are irrelevant, that who they are doesn't count for much (unless they are the child of a prominent citizen). Why are we surprised when students begin to disrespect schooling when they have experienced little but disrespect from their schools? Teachers and others then tend to attribute that anti-school attitude to something intrinsic to the students or their parents or their neighborhood or their culture instead of recognizing it for what it is— a response to the disrespect they have endured through the years and the loss of hope that enduring such disrespect has nurtured. (Quantz, 2011, p. 172)

Gay (2011) describes this, “interactive relationship between instructional effectiveness and classroom management,” and she asserts that, “the extent to which successful teaching and learning occur, the disciplinary dimensions of classroom management diminish” (p. 343). Had Ms. Greene attended to the musical and personal specificities of her students, she would have recognized, initially, that their behavior was not disrespectful but rather a way of communicating that may have differed from hers. Gay (2002) has emphasized that, “communication styles of different ethnic groups reflect cultural values and shape learning behaviors” (p. 111) and may lead to tension and miscommunication between the teacher and student, if the teacher is not aware of these differences.

According to Gregory, Skiba and Noguera (2010),

A large body of evidence shows that Black students are subject to a disproportionate amount of discipline in school settings, and a smaller and less consistent literature suggests disproportionate sanctioning of Latino and American Indian students in some schools. (p. 59)

Oftentimes, students are disciplined based upon behavior criteria with which they are unfamiliar. Students respond to their teachers in ways that are familiar to them, based on their family and cultural interactions. As mentioned earlier, during my first week of

observations, I did not find the students' behavior in Ms. Greene's classroom to be disrespectful. However, their behavior did not comply with the ways in which Ms. Greene expected them to behave. Gregory et al. suggest, "explanations for the over selection of certain students for discipline may include cultural mismatch, implicit bias, or negative expectations in classrooms and schools." (2010, p. 63). Ms. Greene assumed that her understanding of respectful behavior was universally accepted. The consequence of this assumption was that the, "students' lack of knowledge of unspoken rules translate[d] to missed learning" (Milner & Tenore, 2010, p. 562).

The underlying problem of Ms. Greene's music teaching approach, and others like hers, are the assumptions and presumptions about universality (Gustafson, 2009). For white educators, who are privileged by dominant discourses, the saliency of culture in minoritized children's lives is undetectable, particularly because the children's cultural epistemologies are not recognized within dominant epistemologies. The invisibility of minoritized students' cultural epistemologies within normalized education discourses does not, however, deem them unimportant. Quite the opposite, it is their invisibility that makes their uncovering and recognition all the more pressing. As stated by Erickson (2010),

Everything in education relates to culture—to its acquisition, its transmission, and its invention. Culture is in us and all around us, just as the air we breathe. In its scope and distribution, it is personal, familial, communal, institutional, societal, and global. (p. 35, as cited in Gay, 2010, p. 10)

By not recognizing students' epistemologies within our musical framework, we can never fully equitize music education. An understanding of epistemology reaches far beyond the confines of repertoire, method, and curriculum. An understanding of epistemology accounts for the nuanced interactions, and complex manifestations of culture in every

aspect of a child's life. By understanding students' "ways of knowing" music, we can begin to uncover the unquestioned assumptions and normalized rituals within our music classrooms that perpetuate the cycle of exclusion and contribute to the disempowerment of students.

In the next section, I will provide an analysis of Ms. Miller's classroom culture and teaching particularities that created an equitable music experience for her students. By examining the pedagogical and epistemological nuances with which she taught music and situating her approach within discourses of non-dominant epistemologies, *itinerant* (Paraskeva, 2017) and metatheories and, "rhizomatic" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) becoming, I will finish this discussion by examining ways in which the field of music education can "call out" and "dismantle" exclusive practices towards a more equitable music classroom.

### **Congruent Musical Epistemology**

As mentioned in Chapter IV, I did not intentionally seek out two teachers with contrasting teaching approaches. In fact, prior to my first observations, I assumed they would teach with similar methods and curriculum based upon their educational history. Like Ms. Greene, Ms. Miller had traditional degrees in music education and had spent a significant time in Orff workshops and training; however, Ms. Miller chose to tailor her teaching and curriculum to the interests and cultural epistemologies of her students. Some of the ways she attended to students' cultures were overt such as giving them a choice of which musical cultures they studied. Other ways were subtle, nuanced and dealt with the non-curricular ways culture manifests in students' lives. It was the nuances



in Ms. Miller's teaching that made the most impact on her students. By attending to the nuances, she was attending to the true essence of their cultural expression.

### **The Paradox of Classroom Management**

In her discussion about classroom management through the lens of *culturally responsive pedagogy*, Gay (2011) suggests that there is an inverse relationship between classroom management and good teaching in that responsive teaching deems classroom discipline unnecessary. She states, "If teachers give students what they need, make lessons interesting, energetic and exciting, affirm their personal identity and dignity, and cultivate feelings of belonging there will be no problems or tensions in the classroom" (p. 345). This was certainly the case in Ms. Miller's classroom. I never once observed her taking disciplinary action and her classroom was always "well-managed."

In a case study conducted by Monroe and Obidah (2004) on the relationship between cultural synchronization and classroom discipline, they conducted 36 classroom observations as well as two interviews with an African American middle school teacher. The students in the classroom were all African American except for one white student. The findings from Monroe and Obidah's study are particularly salient for the discussion of Ms. Miller's teaching style. They found that, "the teacher and students' shared cultural orientation influenced the teacher's responses to behaviors traditionally defined as disruptive in research literature" (p. 258). Of significance, was the teacher's use of playful banter and humor in the classroom and this was incorporated using dialect and, "linguistic and colloquial student expressions" (p. 263). The findings from Monroe and Obidah's study parallel the ways in which Ms. Miller interacted with her students. Ms. Miller nurtured an environment in which the students felt safe to communicate and

interact as themselves. Her use of banter and dialect in her teaching demonstrated her care for her students' cultures. This resulted in an uplifting, stimulating, creative and energetic environment. Students were uninhibited in their participation. They spoke, sang, danced, and composed freely and creatively.

Student freedom was a trait noted by Gustafson (2009) in her observations of an elementary music teacher who provided, "more equal treatment of musical dispositions" (p. 197). She states,

At no time did he discourage extroverted movement or sing-along . . . it was just as valuable to gesture energetically with head arms and legs along with the opening theme of Beethoven's *Symphony no. 5* as to perform a movement from a violin concerto by Vivaldi. (Gustafson, 2009, p. 198)

Gustafson's description reminded me of the freedom of movement Ms. Miller allowed her students. While listening to a piece of music, students could be seen lying down, walking around the room, dancing, or sitting. Paradoxically, the expansion of freedom did not automatically lead to chaos but rather allowed students to be agents of their own musical interpretation. The freedom to be expressive was emphasized and highly valued by the students:

My favorite thing is that we don't have to just sit down and listen to a teacher talk. We get to get up and get active and um, we get to make our own songs, and we don't have to stick to the same topic all the time. (Kesha)

Because it's free. Especially with this assignment because I like to express what I have. (Aisha)

I like this class. It's not like any other class. This is like the time where I just get that energy up, and it's like ... We don't just sit and learn stuff, we dance around and ... we do a lot of stuff. (Luis)

## Linguistic Appropriateness

Ms. Miller's use of a dialect with which her students were familiar was indicative of cultural synchronization in the classroom, as described by Monroe and Obidah's (2004) study. Linguistic competence is one of the defining linchpins of Paris' conception of *culturally sustaining pedagogy*. In their discussion about language as agency and sustenance for marginalized youth, Bucholtz, Casillas, and Lee (2017) assert that, "one of the most important yet most devalued resources available to youth of color is their language" (p. 44). In the same collection on culturally sustaining pedagogies, Rosa and Flores (2017) introduce,

a critical raciolinguistic perspective . . . to examine the ways that discourses of appropriateness . . . are complicit in normalizing the reproduction of the White gaze by marginalizing the linguistic practices of language-minoritized populations in U.S. society. (p. 186)

They discuss how, "discourses of appropriateness" are tied to notions of "high" and "low" language forms—much like discourses about "high" and "low" musical forms (classical or nonclassical). Language hierarchy allows for the justification of "academically appropriate," and in doing so, "inappropriate" language. Students are told that the linguistic practices that form the basis of their identities are not appropriate for the classroom. The repercussions of these discourses are that students feel alienated, inhibited, or silenced in the classroom. Instead, Bucholtz et al. and Rosa and Flores contend that students' linguistic practices must be sustained in the classroom, including, "realms of cultural practice that tend not to be recognized as such and are instead often pathologized as evidence of cultural, intellectual, or moral deficiency" (Bucholtz et al., 2017, p. 45). Bucholtz et al.'s statement is of particular importance in discussing Ms. Miller's classroom and the broader field of music education and will be explored further

in the next section. Although this was merely a cursory look at the complex discussions taking place about language in the K-12 classroom, the ways in which this discussion parallels, “discourses of appropriateness” in music education are salient.

### **Tenets of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy**

Culturally sustaining pedagogy calls for teachers to *sustain* their students’ cultures as important entities into themselves. It also, however, emphasizes that teachers provide access to dominant culture and most importantly, that they provide tools with which to question the dominant culture. As I revisited the literature on culturally sustaining pedagogy and became acquainted with Paris and Alim’s (2017) recent compilation, I was struck by the ways Ms. Miller’s teaching fit into a culturally sustaining pedagogical framework. Most salient about this discovery was that Ms. Miller’s use of “pathologized,” often discouraged forms of communication, singing and teaching led to a more successful classroom experience for both the students and herself.

First, her awareness and deliberate use of students’ cultures in the classroom encouraged them to do the same. The banter and dialect she used in her teaching communicated to students that she respected who they were. As noted by Aisha, “It’s not really the class itself, it’s the teacher. Like I like Ms. Miller really because she’s open. She’s free, I mean, like I said, she’s not strict. She’s just like a real person with us.” Rather than “pathologize” or discourage cultural forms that were important for the students, like African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and belt singing, Ms. Miller, herself, used them in her teaching. By providing students the freedom to express and interpret music in ways that were meaningful for them, Ms. Miller encouraged students to sustain their musical epistemologies. In addition, the nuanced, yet complex

ways in which Ms. Miller attended to her students' vocality, both in language and in sound, demonstrate the importance of vocality in culturally sustaining music education.

### **Access and Critique**

In addition to sustaining students' cultures, Paris and Alim (2017) call for educators to provide access to the dominant epistemology. The structure of Ms. Miller's classroom was like that of the positive teaching environment Gustafson (2009) observed: "The themes of famous symphonies, facts about the lives of composers, and the melodies of popular songs were cross-cultural events" (p. 198). Although very well planned and structured, Ms. Miller's classes can be best described as a creative bricolage of diverse musical forms, cultures, and activities. Each class was its own innovative masterpiece. This structure allowed students to be exposed to Western and non-Western musical styles and discourses simultaneously. The overlapping and combining of contrasting traditions diffused the traditional musical hierarchy found in music classrooms. Ms. Miller's teaching provided students with access to the dominant Eurocentric musical epistemology as well as the musical epistemologies of many other cultures. Both Kesha and Aisha valued the experience of broadening their musical horizons.

Like if you want to go to a different country or another state or something where you can learn their music and then you won't feel like, well, I know nothing about this place at all. (Kesha)

It's awesome because the singing here- we're learning about other cultures. I love like going to other countries like and learning about what they do because I want to go out of my comfort zone to other countries to see what they do, and then bring it back. (Aisha)

Ms. Miller's respect for her students' epistemologies in her pedagogical approach and her respect for non-Eurocentric musical epistemologies in her curriculum communicated to her students a different value system than they had previously experienced in music class.

Because of this, the students were able to articulate the ways in which they were empowered in Ms. Miller's class and disempowered in Ms. Greene's. By critically analyzing the relationship between their empowerment and the teacher's approach, they could begin to recognize harmful dominant discourses.

### **Culture Sustains**

At the heart of Bucholtz et al.'s (2017) discussion is that "*culture sustains*" (p.45). Teachers who uplift students' cultural epistemologies empower their students. The students in Ms. Miller's class exuded confidence. Aisha transformed from being, "that one kid that really deliberately did everything the opposite of what she said" in Ms. Greene's class to a confident and expressive participant in Ms. Miller's class. As mentioned in Chapter IV, with Ms. Miller's help, Aisha began a music group at school:

Me, my friends and some other people, there's twelve people that know about this group I'm trying to start called "WGT." It's uh, stands for "we got talent." And so, what it basically is like singing, dancing, acting and it's for people that didn't get to do stuff they wanted to. And so, my group allows them to do whatever they want and perform it and do stuff like that.

For Aisha, culture truly sustained her. Ms. Miller's attention to the culturally nuanced ways in which her students experienced music, singing and speech created an environment in which they could each find their voice and feel empowered to musically express who they were. The complexity and nuance of language, communication, and expression within a child's particular way of knowing music or "musical epistemology" make that specific musical epistemology unique. The extent to which these nuances or, "rituals" (Quantz, 2011) are recognized or not within a music classroom determine the extent to which a child is empowered or silenced.

In other words, ritual is not merely a technique, a method for improving learning, it is an agonistic space of meaning-making that is worth struggling

over— it is where the real work of schooling takes place and unless we are attuned to it, we will never be able to move toward the hope of a transformative education that many of us embrace. (Quantz, 2011, p.18)

## **Ritual**

Quantz's (2011) discussion about rituals in educational settings provides a framework through which we can consider Ms. Miller's teaching as well as ways to attend to ritual in music education. According to Quantz,

The real importance of education actually occurs in those nonrational areas that we rarely think about or plan. If there is a "new pedagogy," it will be in organizing and considering the nonrational aspects of schooling. (p. 8)

In her teaching, Ms. Miller attended to rituals of humor, dialect and singing style that were familiar for her students. She allowed for movement and dialogue outside of normalized discourses of silence and stillness. By attending to the nuances that were meaningful for her students, she provided a classroom culture which was safe and uplifting for all of her students to express themselves authentically.

While Ms. Miller accessed students' "funds of knowledge" in the classroom, Ms. Greene unknowingly silenced them. The saliency of ritual became increasingly crucial to me as I analyzed the findings. I have "struggled" over the ways in which I might provide Ms. Greene a voice without de-emphasizing the harm her students experienced. The question that continued to plague me as I read and re-read the interview transcripts and pored over my field notes was; how is it that Ms. Greene was not able to see the humanity in these students that they so clearly revealed to me? Ms. Greene's admission that, "I don't remember learning strategies for this type of situation" as well as "some days I don't want to do it anymore, but I don't know what I would do" were indicative of the ways in which she felt out of control. To assert control, she used the methods,

curriculum, and pedagogy that she was ensured would create a productive music classroom. Both Ms. Greene and the students were harmed by current music teacher education practices that have normalized a Eurocentric epistemology over the needs and realities of American K-12 students. How might teacher education attend to the nuances, the non-rational interactions, the sometimes-enigmatic territory in which students and teachers alike make meaning. How might teacher education expand to include alternative musical epistemologies—laterally not hierarchically?

Scholars from multiple disciplines who have sought to expand the epistemic horizons of their field emphasize the need to first dismantle, deterritorialize, decolonize and then engage in “epistemic travel” to envision new possibilities towards a liberation of both the teacher and student (Asante, 2011; Calderon, 2014; Domínguez, 2017; Gould, 2012; Mbembe, 2016; Paraskeva, 2017). Drawing from those studies, in the following sections, I will discuss ways in which the field of music education might decentralize the Eurocentric musical epistemology and embrace Paraskeva’s (2017) conception of an *Itinerant Curriculum Theory* towards epistemic diversity and equality.

### **Beyond a Eurocentric Framework**

Within the fields of curriculum studies (Calderon, 2014) and educational policy (Patel, 2016), both Calderon and Patel emphasize the need to extend beyond Eurocentric epistemologies and structures to dismantle coloniality in education. Calderon states, “Unfortunately, critical discourses (e.g., critical race theory, queer theory, etc.) based in Western epistemologies fail to decolonize settler colonial ideologies and practices by centering modern nation-state such as racial remedies” (Calderon, 2014, p. 315). Patel (2016) suggests that, “the maintained belief that a colonial society’s structures can



provide the infrastructure within which noncontingent emancipation can take place is, therefore, a colonizing theory of change” (p. 118). Therefore, to equitize the field of music education, the ideological, “linchpin that keeps inequality in place” (Gustafson, p. 197) must be unearthed with non-Eurocentric musical frameworks. In doing so, Gustafson asserts that we cannot ignore, “the historic role played by race in music” (p. 124) because this would allow for the perpetuation of colonialist discourses. A true dismantling requires an epistemological shift as well as a reckoning of the ways in which racist discourses are embedded in music education traditions.

Attempts within the field of music education and the broader field of education to equitize curriculum and practice have been largely unsuccessful because they have remained within the same Eurocentric framework (Hess, 2015; Paris & Alim, 2017). Gustafson notes the ways in which the Tanglewood Symposium (Choate, Fowler, Brown, & Wersen, 1967),

and other reform conferences of a similar nature . . . consider[ed] recommendations for openness to new aesthetic values [but] did not fundamentally change the primacy of maintaining concert etiquette, a still body and cultivated attitude toward introspection while listening to music. (Gustafson, 2009, p. 122)

Diversity and multicultural content has been addressed, but because they were done so within a Eurocentric framework, the saliency of epistemological nuances, such as body entrainment and vocalicity were unrecognizable. The intention to move the field in a more equitable direction was commendable and the point is not to dismiss the significance of the Tanglewood symposium and other reforms; however, “If our discussions around diversifying content are not equally concerned with repositioning what valued

knowledges and cultural patterns *are*, we continue to perpetuate coloniality” (Domínguez, 2017, p. 230).

### **Decolonization, Dismantling**

The process of decolonization and the dismantling of hegemonic Eurocentric discourses requires the, “naming” of injustices (Bradley, 2015; Gustafson, 2009). This study has shown the ways in which normalized music practices are harmful for students for whom the Eurocentric music epistemology is not relevant, as seen in Ms. Greene’s classroom. The disciplining of students’ bodies as they engage with music, both in listening and singing, silences their “singing bodies.” Therefore, by “calling out” musical discourses that allow for the racialization of students’ bodies and the silencing of body entrainment and vocal expression, we can recognize the need for an expanded musical framework. Ms. Miller’s teaching provided us with an opportunity to see what teaching beyond a Eurocentric musical epistemology might look like and the ways in which this teaching empowered rather than silenced students. By addressing the specific nuances within music teaching that continue to silence students, we are attending to what Domínguez (2017) considers,

Perhaps the most foundational element of a decolonizing teacher education, [which] is to actively and intentionally disrupt and unsettle the epistemology—the norms, logic, values, and way of knowing—that guides our thinking about, and in, the process of pedagogical development. (Domínguez, 2017, p. 233)

In his discussion about decolonizing the university in South Africa, Mbembe (2016) articulates the difficulty in dismantling hegemonic practices.

This hegemonic notion of knowledge production has generated discursive scientific practices and has set up interpretive frames that make it difficult to think outside of these frames. But this is not all. This hegemonic tradition also actively represses anything that actually is articulated, thought and envisioned from outside of these frames. (Mbembe, 2016, p. 33)

Much like Mbembe (2016), Paris (2012) recognized the difficult work of dismantling systemic injustices and how discourses of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy were misappropriated by the system. He hoped a new framework might, “intentionally disrupt and unsettle the epistemology” (Domínguez, 2017, p. 233).

How might the field of music education disrupt and actively work to uncover coloniality in our practices? Mbembe (2016) proposed,

a pluriversity . . . a process of knowledge production that is open to epistemic diversity. It is a process that does not necessarily abandon the notion of universal knowledge for humanity, but which embraces it via a *horizontal strategy of openness to dialogue among different epistemic traditions*. To decolonize the university is to therefore to reform it with the aim of creating a less provincial and more open critical cosmopolitan pluriversalism – a task that involves the radical *refounding* of our ways of thinking and a transcendence of our disciplinary divisions. (Mbembe, 2016, p. 37)

Mbembe’s (2016) emphasis on interdisciplinary work and dialogue is particularly salient for the field of music education. How might the work in other fields inform the process of dismantling and expanding music teacher education towards a new epistemic understanding? Within the field of music education, Gould (2012) similarly emphasizes a cross-disciplinary, rhizomatic approach as a means of disrupting musical elitism:

Rhizomatic lines of flight connect the theoretical and political, include experiences from everyday life, conflate so-called high and low culture, and mix expressive modes, which describes the transdisciplinary nature of rhizomatic thought. Not only are ideas borrowed from one discipline to another, the hierarchies on which they are organized are deliberately subverted or deterritorialized. (Gould, 2012, p. 82)

Mbembe’s (2016) and Gould’s (2012) descriptions of epistemic exploration being horizontal or rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) is common among scholars who are working to decolonize education, both in music and beyond. Hess (2015) inquires,

Is it possible to create a curriculum rhizomatically instead of hierarchically (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) where knowledge is constructed horizontally as a series of plateaus instead of in an arboreal, hierarchical fashion with everything stemming from Western classical music?" (Hess, 2015, pp. 341-342)

Conceptions of rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) within a music education framework allow for a cross-epistemic understanding of music in which the Western canon is decentralized and experienced only as it relates to a multitude of musical epistemologies. Drawing from Thobani's (2007) analysis of the ways in which discourses of, "exaltation" perpetuated coloniality in Canada, Hess (2015) poignantly asks, "What happens if we outright refuse the "exalted" status of Western music (Thobani, 2007)?" Perhaps this is the unsurmountable barrier that has impeded the equitization of music education. Are music educators willing to relinquish the "superiority" discourse of the Western classical canon? When Michael Butera, the CEO of NAFME, an organization that, "represents more than 60,000 music teachers across the country" (Billboard, 2016) was fired because of racist comments, he responded by saying,

The field of music educators, much like the general population of educators, is skewed toward white individuals. We have had ongoing and rich discussions in our Association community about how best to address this issue but have not yet been able to actualize a solution. This is not for lack of trying. (Billboard, 2016)

If 50 years after the Tanglewood Symposium (Choate et al., 1967), the former CEO of NAFME believes a solution, "has not been actualized," then what *is* the solution?

How might we refocus the field towards the needs and realities of students and away from the, "exaltation" and preservation of a tradition. The Western classical tradition has meaning for many. It is not the musical tradition itself that is causing inequity but rather the way in which it is considered infallible and universal. A hybridity

of musical epistemologies, interrelated and attended to rhizomatically might allow for the dismantling of the musical hierarchy towards a more just future.

### **An *Itinerant* Approach to Music Education**

As I continued with my analysis and exploration of literature that would help to make sense of my findings, I found myself searching for something deeper, to examine the ways in which the field of music education could move beyond the bounds of a Eurocentric epistemology to embrace a hybridity of musical epistemologies. It was then that I discovered Paraskeva's (2017) conception of an *Itinerant Curriculum Theory*. His radical approach to dismantling the canon and resurrecting marginalized epistemologies as a means of liberation, decolonization and empowerment provided me with a framework to address the experiences of Ms. Greene and her students.

As a means of addressing coloniality in education, Paraskeva (2017) conceived of a theory that deterritorializes, decolonizes, and liberates by, "calling out the Western Modern Eurocentric epistemicide" (p. 3). By addressing the "epistemicide"—the destruction of non-Eurocentric epistemologies—within educational practice and theory, we can begin to dismantle the ideological confines of coloniality in education. Paraskeva calls for educators to unveil the epistemologies erased by colonialism and dominant white discourses and expand beyond Eurocentric frameworks as a means of decolonizing. He states, "paradoxically, even though particular radical, critical, neo-Marxist approaches were criticizing functionalist dominant and counter-dominant traditions, the reality is that they relied precisely on a functionalist approach as well" (p. 2). This realization, "allowed [him] to understand in deep the need to work below, above and beyond Modern Western Eurocentric theory" (p. 4). Paraskeva's theoretical conception calls for a

coexistence of diverse epistemologies, rhizomatically (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), “that there is no theoretical and/or political incompatibility between Marxist critical impulses and non-Western epistemes” (Paraskeva, 2017, p. 30).

Similarly, Asante (2011) calls for a, “metatheory” which, “allows us to develop better interpretations, fuller understandings, and more effective articulations of the meaning of human goals and interactions” (p. 45). According to Asante, metatheories allow us to move beyond misconceptions of universality.

Afrocentricity’s response certainly is not to impose its own particularity as a universal as Eurocentricity has often done. But hearing the voice of African American culture with all of its attendant parts is one way of creating a more sane society and one model for a more humane world. (Asante, 2011, p. 23)

Asante (2011) and Paraskeva (2017) emphasize the need for a pluralistic and hybrid approach to epistemology. By including the voices and epistemologies of the marginalized within educational discourses, the bounds of coloniality can be destroyed. The diversity of American K-12 schools requires that teacher education provide teachers with diverse epistemological discourses to empower them to attend to the cultural nuances with which their students learn. In doing so, both teachers and students can be empowered.

### **Epistemic Travel**

Considering Paraskeva’s (2017) and Asante’s (2011) conceptions of an itinerant and metatheory, how might the field of music education expand its epistemic horizons? In his discussion about, “culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogies” (Domínguez, 2017), Domínguez suggests that, “epistemic travel” is vital to teacher education. He emphasizes that, “there is effort and imagination involved and uncertainty . . . as we set out into unknown terrain” (p.225). Themes of travel, exploration, imagination, and

uncertainty are common amongst Domínguez, Paraskeva and Asante in their discussions about epistemic expansion.

I think of the ways in which prescriptive music education methods robbed Ms. Greene of her own imaginative agency as a teacher. Epistemic travel is the necessary step towards resurrecting agency in both teachers and students and closing the ontological distance between them. Discussions about musical cultures and curriculum are susceptible to becoming essentialized or fixed representations of culture; however, epistemic travel requires that teachers engage with a hybridity of musical epistemologies, “in both heritage and emergent terms” (Domínguez, p. 233). By simultaneously, “sustain[ing] and revitalize[ing] heritage practices and deeply rooted community wisdom, while nurturing the dynamic, evolving identities, ingenuity, and practices of historically marginalized and culturally diverse youth” (p. 225), teachers can empower their students. The notion of *epistemological* broadening is important because it allows for the musical practices, ways of knowing, and values in addition to musical content. The recognition of student’s cultural practices in the classroom can be transformational for them. Therefore, as music teachers engage in epistemic exploration, they might ask themselves, “Are there practices that communities have sustained over time (albeit in hybrid forms and transformations) that have sustained communities to be resilient in the face of challenge?” (Lee, 2017, p. 266). This is particularly salient for music educators because music has played an important role in the struggle and sustenance of disenfranchised communities. Attending to music epistemologies allows teachers to more deeply and critically investigate the multifaceted ways in which students *know* music.

## VII – SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary

The prioritization of a Eurocentric musical epistemology within the field of music education excludes and silences students for whom this epistemology is not relevant. Despite the rich diversity present in American K-12 schools and scholarship on culturally responsive music education (Fitzpatrick, 2012; Lind & McKoy, 2016; Shaw, 2014), music teacher education is largely the same as it was 50 years ago when the Tanglewood Symposium (Choate, Fowler, Brown, & Wersen, 1967) addressed diversity. Within the broader field of education, Paris conceived of *culturally sustaining pedagogy* in response to a similar conundrum—the neo-liberalization of equity and social justice practices in education. He asserts that, rather than radically change the educational climate for marginalized students, discourses about culture and relevance had reinstated the dominant hierarchy. Therefore, Paris and Alim (2017) and others (Bucholtz et al., 2017; Domínguez, 2017, Ladson-Billings, 2014; Lee, 2017) proposed a decolonial, radical pedagogy that recognizes students’ cultures as life-giving entities unto themselves and not merely a bridge for teaching dominant culture. In addition, they emphasized both the changing, or, “emergent” (Domínguez, 2017, p. 233) nature of culture as well as the historical, “heritage” (p. 233) and, “intergenerational cultural practices” (Lee, 2017, p. 266).

Although music has played an important role in many historical and emergent intergenerational cultural practices for minoritized communities, the musical practices



that have and continue to sustain those communities are not recognized within school music classrooms. Instead, the practices that *are* emphasized, shaped by the Western classical canon, stem from the notion that music epistemology is universal. This framework excludes non-Eurocentric conceptions of musical embodiment, expression and vocality allowing for the silencing and racializing of student bodies in the classroom.

As a voice teacher, I internalized and regurgitated the normalized Eurocentric discourses that I learned in my undergraduate and graduate music programs without realizing their harm. It took moving to the United Arab Emirates and taking a university voice position to recognize the ways in which those normalized discourses perpetuated exclusion. The deeply embedded ideology within postsecondary schools of music in the United States is deceptively convincing. To discover the ways in which this ideology impacted students in K-12 general music classrooms, especially students from diverse backgrounds, I chose to situate my study within the K-12 context.

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how two groups of adolescent music students from a diverse urban public school perceive the singing and the music teaching in their general music classrooms. The school at which this study was conducted is in a midwestern city in an area where the poverty level is higher than the national average. Students at this school are primarily of color and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Using purposeful sampling, I chose this school based upon the student diversity and the music teachers' backgrounds. The two general music teachers at this school had similar educational backgrounds. Both had bachelor's and master's degrees in music education with an emphasis in voice from institutions with student bodies that were primarily white. Both teachers were white women in their mid-

thirties. In addition to the teachers, the participants of this study consisted of two general music classrooms, one fifth grade and one sixth grade, each taught by one of the teachers. I chose these classrooms based upon the age of the students, that they were in adolescence (World Health Organization, 2016), as well as the compulsory nature of the general music class. Over the course of three months, I conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with students from both classrooms, two teacher interviews, and twice-weekly observations of each classroom. Of the 14 student interviews, seven students were African American, two were from Honduran or Honduran-Mexican immigrant families, one was Latino, one was from an Eritrean immigrant family and three were white. The following research questions formed the premise of this study:

1. How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background?
2. How do they describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class?
3. How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher?

The interview data and field notes from the observations were coded, organized, and analyzed into categories and subcategories using the, “constant comparative” method of analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) during data collection and Creswell’s (2013), “data-analysis spiral” upon completion of data collection. The findings from this study can be best represented under four broad categories.

1. What is Music for These Students?
2. “A Tale of Two Classrooms”
3. Students’ Vocal Profiles

#### 4. If They Could Teach the Music Class, How Would They Teach?

Within the first broad category, findings which depicted students' musical lives were organized into two sub-categories. The first sub-category is the role music plays in students' self-expression and identity, and the second sub-category is the importance of family in students' music identities. The second broad category showed the ways in which students perceived the two music teachers' teaching and classroom cultures as diametrically opposite. The third broad category examined how the first broad category—self-expression and identity, and music and family—and the second broad category—classroom vocal teaching—intersect to form a student's vocal esteem. The fourth broad category consisted of students' conceptions of how they might create a meaningful music classroom.

Although I did not plan to observe two contrasting teaching approaches, the two teachers, Ms. Miller, and Ms. Greene, provided me an opportunity to compare a traditional music teaching classroom, where prescriptive Western classical methods were employed, with a non-traditional music classroom that was designed to embrace student autonomy, diversity, and creativity. The fieldnotes and interview data emphasized the ways in which these two approaches manifested in substantially different ways with a profound impact.

#### **Conclusions: Answering the Research Questions**

As discussed in Chapter V, the overarching theme of this study, based on the findings, is the following:

- The congruence or incongruence of a teacher's musical epistemology—"the norms, logic, values, and way of knowing" (Domínguez, 2017, p. 233) music—with the musical epistemologies of her students was the primary reason for student exclusion or empowerment in the classroom.

This theme is based upon the triangulation of student perceptions, classroom observations, and teacher perceptions as well as the answers to the research questions.

**Research Question #1: How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background?**

**Holistic Music**

For the students, singing and emotion, expression, embodiment, family, function, culture, and spirit were intertwined to form their musical selves. Their musical selves, comprised of their musical and vocal identities, were comingled with other aspects of their identity none of which could be separated from the whole. Music functioned as an integral and holistic part of their lives, inseparable from their families, emotions, and ways of being.

Emotionally, many of the students described the ways in which music allowed them to express the complexities in their lives. Family and life experiences were interlinked with their musical expression as a cohesive whole. Their musical expression, experienced both physically and spiritually, was a whole-body encounter. This embodiment of music was relevant in all forms of musical engagement and learning, especially for singing. The singing voice encapsulated the singing body and singing spirit. In essence, their embodiment of music was an amalgamation of their whole selves, their families, and their life experiences.

The complex and interwoven ways in which the students in this study experienced music and singing in their lives is best understood holistically and epistemologically. Students' musical epistemologies encompassed their musical values, cultures and denoted the ways in which they expressed and embodied music. Their holistic conceptions of

music were experienced physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally none of which could be divorced from the others.

### **Afrocentrism and Indigenous Epistemologies**

Theoretical and empirical scholarship framed with Afrocentric and Indigenous epistemologies provide insight into the students' holistic understanding of music. While recognizing the fluidity of culture, Asante (2011) argues that we must in fact recognize that cultural communities *do* possess certain essential characteristics, although not immutable, that provide meaning for them. He further argues that, "only communities considered of low status are required to abandon their essential characteristics, while others seek to preserve their characteristics for generations yet unborn" (p. 13), and,

Cultures do exist and in fact persist for centuries with many basic characteristics hardly changed. This is the nature of human societies operating on the foundations of myths, history, and memories. The African American community is no different from others in this regard. There are certain essential characteristics that identify the contours of our African American community. These are not immutable characteristics, in the sense of being inborn, but rather the fundamental outlines of what we regard and preserve as characteristic of our society. (Asante, 2011, p. 13)

Asante's perspective is particularly salient for the field of music education. How might we better understand non-Eurocentric musical epistemologies without essentializing culture but still recognize and attend to important cultural practices? A hybrid understanding of musical epistemologies allows for cultural practices in their traditional form to coexist with newly emergent forms.

Asante's (2011) discussion about the arts within an Afrocentric epistemology can provide one piece of the hybrid musical epistemology, one that might provide meaning for some of the students, albeit in evolving forms. Asante traces non-Eurocentric communication patterns within African American orature back to slavery.

With an African heritage steeped in orature and the acceptance of transforming vocal communication, the African American developed a consummate skill in using language to produce communication patterns alternative to those employed in the Euro-American situation . . . in the work songs, Ebonics, sermons, and spirituals with their dual meanings, one for the body and one for the soul. (Asante, 2011, p. 97)

Asante's emphasis on the cultural patterns of communication in song and speech, both in body and in soul, speaks to the ways in which the students described their musical expression as one that attended to the physical body and spirit.

Asante (2011) further examines the physical embodiment of art in African and African American traditions as a distinctive epistemological difference from the way art is conceived in a Eurocentric epistemology.

The European sees a work of art as an object that has meaning and rhythm, whereas the African sees *kuntu*, or art, as action: the poem as recited, the carving as a stimulus in the worship of an orisha, the mask as part of the movement of the dance—that is, when it is *kuntu*. That is why oratory in African cultures is never a thing but always activity. (Asante, 2011, p. 62)

The epistemological nuance of “music as action” is emblematic of the ways in which students' embodied their singing.

Kubow's and Min's (2016) empirical work within, “indigenous African and non-Western perspectives” and the ubuntu epistemology, provides further insight into the discussion about holistic musical embodiment. Their study which explored South African teachers' use of Indigenous African epistemologies as a means of disrupting colonialist narratives, sheds light on the saliency of a holistic knowledge system within non-Eurocentric paradigms. According to Kubow and Min, “The teachers in this study depict ubuntu as encompassing no fewer than three dimensions: philosophical (the mind); value and attitudinal (the heart); and action (the hand)” (p. 2). Again, much like Asante (2011) and the students' epistemological conceptions, Ubuntu emphasizes a holistic way

of knowing. Again, “action” is emphasized as a key component of the epistemology as well as the spirit: “Distinct from scientism premised on objectivity, ubuntu’s epistemological assumptions about reality embrace the sacred as well as the empirical” (p. 5). The exploration of indigenous and Afrocentric epistemologies provides us with a lens through which to better understand the students’ holistic musical epistemologies.

**Research Question #2: How do students describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class?**

The students described the two music classrooms as diametrically opposed. Based on their descriptions, Ms. Greene’s classroom was incongruent with their musical epistemologies, whereas, Ms. Miller’s classroom was congruent. As a means of comparing the two teacher’s approaches, the students’ descriptions of the vocal and music teaching in their general music classroom will be presented under those two categories.

**Culturally Incongruent Classroom**

The students in Ms. Greene’s class described her teaching as it related to their musical epistemologies—the ways in which they were accustomed to experiencing and engaging with music. Many of them used the term, “different” to describe the incongruence between the classroom musical experience and the music they experienced at home. “Different” was used to describe the use of head voice in the music classroom which was unfamiliar for many of them and in contrast to the ways in which they used their voices outside of the music classroom. Discourses of difference were also used to

describe the ways in which movement was absent from their music classroom experience compared to their home musical experience.

The students' perceived Ms. Greene's classroom as a strict environment where their bodies and voices were disciplined. They described the disciplining of their musical bodies as a strict demarcating of "proper" and "improper" musical embodiment. Their voices were disciplined with Ms. Greene's adherence to "proper" singing technique—with posture, head voice and mouth opening. For many, the disciplining of their bodies and voices meant that they could not be themselves in the music classroom. The silencing of students' identities led them to react either by retreating or by deliberately misbehaving. Those who misbehaved were more strictly disciplined which allowed for a perpetual cycle of silencing, reacting, and discipline. Students who responded to the strict classroom culture by retreating were inhibited in their musical expression and exploration. For many of them, singing played an important role in their lives outside of the music classroom, and they felt confident in their vocal expression. However, Ms. Greene's classroom culture did not account for the ways in which they expressed themselves with singing; therefore, a silencing of their musical epistemology, led to their inhibition to sing.

Interestingly, Shaw (2014) had similar findings in her study. The choir members in her study also described their own singing in opposition to a Western classical singing style. Their discourses of "difference" were expressed in terms of "regular" (their own singing) and "white" (Western classical singing). Similarly, the singers in Shaw's study identified similar criteria that positioned the Western classical way of singing in opposition to their own singing. The prioritization of head voice did not allow for the



chest-heavy vocal production with which they could clearly express the emotions and clarity of the text.

In the South Side choir, Zoey and Jazmin associated the same discourse norms (the Western classical canon; notation-based learning strategies; and the timbre, tone, and vocal style associated with Western European singing) with a White way of singing. Initially, they were hesitant to emulate what they perceived to be White vocal models and expressed a strong preference for singing with their “regular voices.” Singing with their regular voices involved extensive use of chest voice, a comfortably low vocal range, and freedom to apply stylistic qualities associated with African American singing. (Shaw, 2014, pp. 286-287)

In addition, Shaw (2014) described the students’ reactions to a musical way of knowing that differed from that of their own, “as a symbolic response in which they viewed crossing cultural boundaries as compromising their cultural identity” (Shaw, p. 287). Both the findings from this study and from Shaw’s study speak to Gustafson’s (2009) description of student retreat from environments or activities that are in opposition to their very being.

From this study, Ms. Greene’s teaching, described by students as, “strict” and, “different,” created a music classroom culture that was incongruent with the musical epistemologies of her students. The incongruence led to the silencing of students’ bodies from musical entrainment and their voices from free expression. Because of this, students retreated from participation, felt inhibited to sing or deliberately rejected her teaching.

Ms. Greene’s musical epistemology informed her approach in the music classroom. The Eurocentric emphasis on objectification allowed for “ontological distance” (Domínguez, 2017, p. 228) between Ms. Greene and her students making it difficult for Ms. Greene to empathically engage with her students. The lack of understanding of students’ musical epistemologies led Ms. Greene to employ prescriptive

musical methods indiscriminately therefore alienating her students and herself from meaningful music-making and stripping them of musical agency.

Benedict (2009) equates agency with an, “active disruption and constant interrogation of the choices (and non-choices) we make” (p. 220). The ontological distance between Ms. Greene and her students absolved Ms. Greene from recognizing the ramifications of her curricular choices. Instead, she interpreted student suffering in the music classroom, manifested as inhibition, retreat, or rejection merely as misbehavior or lack of effort. This misinterpretation led to classroom disciplinary practices that further silenced and alienated students. For Ms. Greene and her students to achieve musical agency, according to Benedict, an equitable approach is necessary. Where, “equity is the critical consciousness necessary to challenge exiting ideologies, propaganda, and systems of inequity” for “agency and empowerment to ‘achieve active and rewarding musical lives of [our] choice’” (Regelski, 2005, p. 16 as cited in Benedict, 2009, p. 222).

### **Culturally Congruent Classroom**

The students perceived Ms. Miller’s music classroom as one in which they were empowered to express themselves freely and authentically. This freedom manifested in uninhibited body entrainment and free vocal expression. In addition to musical embodiment, students valued the freedom of creativity in composition and interpretation. They emphasized how they were free to be themselves in Ms. Miller’s class. Many of them recognized that this freedom was because of the ways in which Ms. Miller respected and cared for them. They emphasized how Ms. Miller treated them as “people.” In addition. Ms. Miller’s ability to sing the styles of music that were meaningful for her students communicated to them that she valued their musical cultures.

In addition to singing, her attention to speaking and the dialect and nuanced communication styles of her students empowered her students and nurtured their vocal confidence.

By attending to her students' musical epistemologies with care and respect, Ms. Miller embraced the musical spirits of her students. Many of the students' vocal-esteem had been harmed by Ms. Greene's teaching the year before. A few students had begun to retreat and had been inhibited to sing. A few had reacted defiantly to Ms. Greene and had been strictly disciplined. Ms. Miller's classroom culture, however, provided an environment in which her students' identities could be reaffirmed and their musical spirits could heal. Her attention to students' musical epistemologies empowered her students to be agents of their own musical expression and to fully be themselves in the music classroom. Asante (2011) describes this as "cultural centeredness" (p. 8).

By regaining our own platforms, standing in our own cultural spaces, and believing that our way of viewing the universe is just as valid as any, we will achieve the kind of transformation that we need to participate fully in a multicultural society. (Asante, 2011, p. 8)

Ms. Miller's musical classroom provided a, "platform" for students to, "stand in [their] own cultural spaces." Her teaching communicated to her students that their, "way of viewing the universe was just as valid as any." Ms. Miller's recognition of students' musical epistemologies allowed for their transformation and empowerment.

Thiong'o (2013) considers, "cultural centeredness" (Asante, 2011) a means for disrupting, "the view of literatures (languages and cultures) relating to each other in terms of a hierarchy of power. 'My literature is more aristocratic than yours'" (p. 42). His conception of a, "globalectical approach" for, "organizing and reading literatures" is one in which,

Any text can lead the reader from the “here” of one’s existence to the “there” of other people’s existence and back . . . a reader should start from wherever he or she is located. The imperial approach wanted people from whatever corner of the globe to start from one imperial center, the metropolis of the empire, as the only center. A globalectical imagination assumes that any center is the center of the world. Each specific text can be read as a mirror of the world. (Thiong’o, 2013, p. 42)

Both Thiong’o (2013) and Asante (2011) define cultural centeredness in opposition to coloniality and hegemony. According to Thiong’o’s and Asante’s discussions, Ms. Miller’s students could more fully engage with the world because they were centered in their own, “cultural spaces.” This was demonstrated in their enthusiasm for studying other musical cultures. In their interviews, Ms. Miller’s students emphasized the importance of engaging with the world, musically, and broadening their epistemic horizons. Ms. Miller’s culturally congruent music classroom accounted for students’ musical, cultural, spiritual, and academic selves by attending to students’ musical epistemologies and providing an opportunity for students to expand their musical worldviews.

Shaw’s 2014 study focused on singers’ perceptions of a culturally responsive choral setting. Interestingly, she found that, much like the students’ in Ms. Miller’s class, the singers in a culturally responsive choral environment appreciated the opportunity to expand their, “cultural horizons” (Shaw, 2014, p. 283). According to Shaw’s findings, “while students valued learning opportunities that affirmed their cultural backgrounds, they desired experiences with music and cultures that were beyond the realm of their prior experiences” (Shaw, pp. 283-284). The students who experienced Ms. Miller’s culturally congruent classroom as well as the singers in Shaw’s study who experienced the culturally responsive choir setting were able to expand their musical, epistemic and

cultural horizons because they were in a space in which their identities and epistemologies were valued. In addition, not only were they *able* to engage in this expansion, they *sought* the opportunity to do so.

As seen in Ms. Miller's classroom and in Shaw's study (2014), "cultural centeredness," Asante (2011) allows students to be grounded in their own epistemologies from which they can safely and confidently engage with the unknown. This conception of cultural centeredness is emblematic of the underpinnings of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017). Educators who enact CSP do so because children's cultures sustain them, they center and empower them. This empowerment allows children to be more fully nourished by the educational process.

### **The Norm Rather Than the Exception**

For white teachers who have not experienced overt marginalization, the need for cultural centeredness may not be as visible. However, cultural centeredness is necessary for all human flourishing. According to Asante, the loss of cultural centeredness,

means that we cannot truly be ourselves or know our potential since we exist in a borrowed space. But all space is a matter of point of view or interpretation. Our existential relationship to the culture that we have borrowed defines what and who we are at any given moment. By regaining our own platforms, standing in our own cultural spaces, and believing that our way of viewing the universe is just as valid as any, we will achieve the kind of transformation that we need to participate fully in a multicultural society. (Asante, 2011, p. 8)

Was Ms. Greene, like her students, existing in borrowed space? How might she and her students have gained musical agency if they had been re-centered on their own cultural, "platforms?"

The juxtaposition of Ms. Miller's culturally attentive teaching with Ms. Greene's prescriptive and indiscriminate teaching shows how a music class can have dramatically

different results. How might the field of music education transform to ensure that Ms. Miller's liberating teaching become the norm rather than the exception? How might music teacher education transform to ensure that teachers like Ms. Greene are better equipped for empathic, imaginative, culturally sustaining teaching? By engaging in, "epistemic travel" from our own, "cultural centeredness," we can move towards a richer and more equitable understanding of music for the empowerment and betterment of all involved.

### **Research Question #3: How do they describe an effective or ideal music teacher?**

I developed the third research question to discover how the students' current music classroom was empowering or disempowering. I found that some students in Ms. Greene's class were cautious about describing the music teaching in their classroom, especially if it meant that they would be speaking badly about their teacher. Therefore, by imagining what a meaningful classroom might look like, they were able to identify the aspects of their current music class that were not meaningful and would not be included in their hypothetical music classroom without overtly incriminating their teacher. Students' hesitancy to criticize Ms. Greene demonstrated the ways in which the culture of discipline and mistrust in her classroom had created fear.

### **Culturally Plural Music Classroom**

Ms. Greene's students imagined a classroom in which every voice was heard and recognized, and each student's musical style was equally present within a collective whole. Their conception of a meaningful music classroom was a musically plural one. Many of them emphasized the importance of student agency within a culturally plural

music classroom where student agency was achieved when the teacher relinquished some of her power. An important form of agency that students described was the freedom to be creative and imaginative. They valued the opportunity to be creatively expressive, imaginative in composition, explore the instruments, or collaborate with friends. In addition to being musically plural, the students' hypothetical music classroom would be vocally plural, as well. Many of the students suggested that they would have more singing in their classroom but that the type of singing was important. They valued the use of diverse singing styles and experiences in the music classroom and emphasized that this would allow all voices to be heard.

The students' discussions about a hypothetical, meaningful music classroom shed light on whether their current music experience with Ms. Miller or Ms. Greene was in fact meaningful. Interestingly, Ms. Miller's students used Ms. Miller's classroom as an example of a meaningful music experience. The students in Ms. Greene's music class emphasized plurality and student agency as well as creativity in their hypothetical music classroom. Based upon my observations, Ms. Greene's students had little agency or opportunity to uniquely express themselves. In addition, the fixed curriculum allowed little room for authentic creative exploration. Ms. Greene's students' conceptions of a meaningful classroom, therefore, were in stark contrast to what they experienced in her music class. They imagined a setting in which their musical tastes and spirits were nurtured.

Laird's (2009) conception of, "musical hunger" describes, "musical miseducation" as teaching, "that disadvantages children musically and perhaps therefore also spiritually" (p. 4). Ms. Greene's inattention to the musical needs of her students was

in part because of her inattention to who they were. By maintaining emotional and spiritual distance between the students and herself, she was unable to recognize the humanity of her students. Palmer (2003) describes, “the spiritual dimensions of teaching, learning, and living” as a “connectedness with something larger than our egos—with our own souls, with one another” (p. 380). What Ms. Greene’s students expressed in their interviews was a, “hunger” for a music experience in which their voices were connected to each other and in which they were each seen as a vital part of the whole. As hooks (2010) describes, “love between teacher and student makes recognition possible; it offers a place where the intersection of academic striving meets the overall striving on all our parts to be psychologically whole” (pp. 162-163).

### **Recommendations**

This study began as an exploration into the ways in which discourses about singing manifested in the K-12 classroom and the impact they had on students. The opportunity to juxtapose two opposing music teaching approaches provided me with valuable insight into the power of music teaching. Although much of the literature on culturally responsive music education emphasizes repertoire and authentic music production, I found that the success of Ms. Miller rested in her ability to attend to the nuances, rituals (Quantz, 2011) and her students’ musical “ways of knowing.” In contrast, Ms. Greene’s inattention to the nuances created an “ontological distance” between her students and herself which lead to alienation and an objectification of her students. Because of this objectification, Ms. Greene focused on disciplining (behavior, voices, and bodies) rather than knowing her students. The distinction between a musical epistemology and a music pedagogy allows for a more holistic conception of the ways in



which music is experienced in the classroom. In addition, the fluidity and changeability of knowing, valuing, and experiencing music is less likely to be defined in essentialized and fixed forms. Musical epistemology allows for the intersection of multiple cultures, music, values, in traditional and hybrid forms. Musical epistemology can be conceived as a rhizomatic conception of one's musical way of knowing.

## **Music Teacher Education**

### **Practical Suggestions**

How might music teacher education account for diverse musical epistemologies? How might teachers learn to recognize the nuances that provide meaning for their students and the normalized discourses that silence them? In Chapter V, I discuss the process of dismantling harmful ideology within music education practices and the subsequent epistemic expansion of music teaching. Undergraduate vocal education that is focused solely on the Western classical vocal technique limits music educators' aural and vocal vocabulary. In addition to it being limiting, the underpinning discourses of vocal superiority or inferiority that are perpetuated within this vocal framework have the potential to negatively impact K-12 students. Therefore, one logical first step towards the epistemic expansion of music teacher education is the diversification of vocal education. How might we diversify vocal education in music teacher education to better prepare teachers to serve the needs of American K-12 students? Ideally, the applied voice lesson and voice studio class would be different for music education majors than for voice performance majors. This, however, may not be realistic in the short term. In the curriculum, there are ways in which the current approach can be supplemented or altered to encourage a more equitable vocal education. In place of the vocal studio class which

is traditionally performance-based, one suggested alternative is a case-based, critically-reflective voice class. This course incorporates discussion, singing, teaching as well as video-conference instruction from voice teachers around the world. Units begin with the presentation of particular singing styles from around the world with video clips and recordings. These cases provide a catalyst for class discussion which I frame with the following questions:

1. Why do university music programs only teach Western classical vocal technique to music education students who will be encountering K-12 students from many backgrounds and musical cultures?
2. What are the implications of these limitations?
3. What do you observe from the different cases (vocally)?
4. What were your initial emotional and vocal reactions to each musical example?
5. How might we diversify our vocal teaching?

This discussion provides a framework for the singing and teaching that follow. First, video-conference sessions or webinars with singing teachers who specialize in non-Western classical singing styles provide interactive, diverse instruction and perspectives. After the case studies, class discussion and video-conference lessons, I ask students to choose one singing technique with which they are unfamiliar and ask them to practice this vocality. In addition, each student is asked to prepare a short melody from the vocal technique they chose and prepare a lesson plan to work with the class on this melody and vocality. Once the students have completed this project, we repeat the process of case study, discussion, vocal instruction, practice, and teaching. This continues throughout the semester.

The intent of the course is to encourage students to consider alternative musical epistemologies, both theoretically and practically and perhaps the ways in which a limited epistemology is exclusive. This is fostered with critical reflection as well as empathic engagement with diverse vocalities, both as a singer and as an educator. The intent of the course is not for students to become experts but rather to be exposed to a wide range of singing styles and vocal resources which they can pursue with more depth in the subsequent semesters. The engagement with diverse vocalities and auralities helps to broaden students' concepts of "correct" and "incorrect" singing timbres. In addition, as students grapple with new vocalities in the practice room, they become more in tune with their own vocal instruments.

Oftentimes curricular changes seem impossible to implement, particularly when the changes require that educators develop new skills. This has been the case with vocal departments and the incorporation of Contemporary Commercial Music singing techniques. However, my curricular suggestion for the vocal education of music education majors is possible to implement without hiring full-time faculty who are experts in every specific singing style. The format for the course is not a traditional master-apprentice model but rather an exploratory, democratic introduction to the vast world of singing timbres using online resources and video-conference sessions with singing teachers around the world. The instructor of this course must be well-versed with the singing voice and able to facilitate the classroom vocal explorations and discussions. Although it is not necessary that she be an expert in each specific singing style, it is imperative that she establish the course as a multi-centric vocal approach, rather than Western classical-centric to which all other vocalities are compared. If done, I believe

this can be a meaningful step towards diversifying postsecondary vocal education to better meet the needs of our changing society.

### **Future Directions**

Especially within a globalized, pluralistic world, education must recognize and address the multidimensional realities with which youth are faced. Because singing is so intimately tied to culture and self, vocal education can be used to silence or empower. Culturally incongruent vocal teaching has the potential to inflict severe harm. However, by rethinking vocal pedagogy, vocal teaching can be used to promote a more equitable music classroom.

Undergraduate vocal education for music educators should include multiple vocalities with a wide range of timbral aesthetics. *Bel canto* technique can be taught as one tradition among many rather than the status quo to which all others are compared. Music educators can be better prepared to teach and affirm their students' voices if they are exposed to and can produce nasal, twangy, dark, and belted--to name a few--vocal sounds. In fact, the field of vocal pedagogy lacks terminology that can adequately describe the vibrancy of Chinese operatic singing, the strength of Congolese songs, the beauty of Vietnamese Ca trù, and the passion of Mariachi serenade.

Vocal educators need to expose music education students to a wide range of vocalities and teach students to use their voices to produce a wide range of timbres. What is the position of one's larynx when singing an Arabic folk song? How can one achieve the strident resonance needed to sing a Native American powwow or potlatch song (Kuzmich, 2003)? The discovery of diverse auralities and vocalities can take place in spaces outside of the studio and may be a part of new teacher training. The teacher must

ask herself, “Where and how might I learn Mariachi singing, hip hop, Gospel singing, and Brazilian folk singing? What musical funds of knowledge are available within the community in which I teach? What vocal timbres are most relevant for the K-12 students I teach?”

Through careful study, exploration, and listening, this type of study has the potential to teach students more about the voice as they develop an acute awareness of their own vocal instrument and the possibilities of the human voice. As students simultaneously situate their own voices within the vocalities of “others” they are able to close the “ontological distance” between the two. Educators who are well-versed in diverse singing timbres and vocal funds of knowledge are better equipped to recognize the individual value of each student while simultaneously creating a collective space for each voice to be heard. The vocal palate with which global youth are surrounded is full of vitality, expression, history, originality, and character. Educators should be equipped to sustain and encourage their students’ vocal identities.

The notion of, “epistemic travel” has powerful and exciting possibilities for music educators. Not only would epistemic travel allow for a broadening of our understanding of musical and vocal epistemologies, but it would inspire teachers to be agents and creators of new imaginative ways of teaching music. Repetitive, prescriptive methods and techniques hinder both students’ and teachers’ imaginative exploration. Therefore, by engaging in epistemic exploration, teachers can better equip themselves to attend to the diverse musical epistemologies present in American K-12 music classrooms as well as their own musical curiosity.

## Recommendations for Research

This study provided an in-depth exploration of two music classrooms and the students, teachers, and discourse norms with which each was associated. Further research of a similar nature to better understand the ways in which normalized practices manifest in K-12 music classrooms would be invaluable. The emphasis on students' perceptions triangulated with observations allows for a more equitable understanding of the music classroom. The subsequent comparison of similar classrooms would allow for a more detailed understanding of the phenomenon. If we find multiple classrooms that are similar to Ms. Greene's or Ms. Miller's, what similarities are present in these cases? How might the comparison of those similarities shed light on the normative practices in music teacher education? Further, studies that can provide empirical evidence of what is being taught in music teacher education programs would provide further insight into K-12 practices. Of particular interest, is an empirical investigation of the undergraduate applied voice experience of music education majors as well as the vocal audition criteria required to gain access to undergraduate music education.

In my search for literature that could shed light on the findings from this study, I drew from scholarship in a wide range of fields, especially those with non-Eurocentric frameworks. Indigenous and Afrocentric epistemologies, as well as a wide range of non-Eurocentric epistemic orientations can provide important insight towards broadening music education research. Paraskeva's (2017) conception of an *Itinerant Curriculum Theory* was a radical departure from normalized theoretical conceptions within his field. His inspiration came from a synthesis of diverse and eclectic research because as he found, "fundamental challenges to disciplines tend to come from outside" (Martin Bernal,

1987, as cited in Paraskeva, p. 3). How might an epistemologically diverse theoretical lens better inform our analysis of our music research? How might it provide a more equitable understanding of current practices? An epistemologically diverse theoretical lens may allow us to forge new paths through well-worn terrain with the hopes of uncovering ways in which the field of music education can become more just.

## VIII – FINAL REFLECTION

### **My Personal Journey**

The culmination of the dissertation process has allowed me to reflect back on the journey. I encountered twists, turns, and unexpected terrain as I navigated the steps from beginning to end. I found that my study did not adhere to what some might consider a traditional template but rather was more meaningful if I approached it nomadically—rhizomatically. In fact, it was my own personal transformation that allowed for, or rather, required a deeper analysis of my data.

I started my journey with one goal in mind—to better understand the realities of marginalized music students in K-12 classrooms. I was interested in discovering the ways in which singing and vocal teaching impacted their musical selves. My interest in vocal diversity and the ways in which singing discourses have the power to silence or empower was first catalyzed when I taught voice at a university in the Middle East. However, I now realize that I have been contemplating vocality since I was a child growing up in the Congo. The timbral aesthetics of Congolese singing deeply resonate with and form a part of my musical self. My initial literature review opened my eyes to scholarship on silenced singers, timbral aesthetics and biases, and the ways in which singing discourses, throughout history, have contributed to, “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1982, as cited in Potter, 2006, p. 190) and colonialism. Reflecting on the timbral aesthetics of my childhood and the ways in which I had been silenced in academia, this literature informed my initial dissertation phase. Paris’ (2012) conception



of culturally sustaining pedagogy which resonated deeply with me became the theoretical lens.

The first twist in the journey occurred when I discovered that the two teachers in my study who had similar credentials and educational backgrounds taught with completely different approaches. This realization led to an exploration of literature that might shed light on my findings. My findings also informed the ways in which I viewed my initial literature review. In my initial exploration of Gustafson's (2009) work, I had overlooked her discussion about entrainment and musical embodiment because I too was limited by my own epistemology. Although I had experienced vocal silencing in the ways in which Joyce (2003) describes, I had not taken into consideration the diverse ways in which people *know* singing. It was this realization that led me to the discussion of the singing body and the ways in which singing is defined in non-Eurocentric epistemologies.

The analysis of Ms. Miller's teaching which so clearly was in opposition to traditional music teaching methods allowed me to more deeply explore the question: what is culturally relevant or sustaining music teaching? So much of the literature on culturally relevant music teaching discusses repertoire, curriculum, pedagogy, but I found that it could not sufficiently account for the ways in which Ms. Miller was a culturally relevant and sustaining teacher. My analysis of her teaching coincided with Paris and Alim's 2017 compilation of culturally sustaining pedagogies. The scholars in this compilation discuss issues of coloniality, linguistic purification and epistemic travel. Their discussions catalyzed my own epistemic exploration. Afrocentric and Indigenous frameworks, which resonate deeply with me, provided me with a means to articulate the

nuances of Ms. Miller's teaching. It was through my exploration of new literature that I came to a meaningful recognition. In fact, I felt liberated by it. Culturally sustaining music teaching, teaching that is attentive of and responsive to students' musical epistemologies—their ways of knowing music—is less daunting than we might think. It is in the non-rational rituals (Quantz, 2011) that occur in our music classrooms where Davion can freely call back to his teacher in affirmation of what she said without being reprimanded for not raising his hand; where Aisha, Luis, and Precious can freely embody the music without feeling inhibited; and where Isabella, Alma, and Mercy's vocal and linguistic competence is celebrated.

Although my dissertation journey may have been unconventional, it was in the unconventionality that I found meaning and the ability to better understand my findings. By exploring new terrain, I came upon a clearing—a vast expansion of my own epistemic horizons, unbound by templates, conventions, and normalized discourses—in which I could uncover something much deeper. The itinerant, the traveler searches for meaning beyond the confines of what has been with hopes of finding what might be. For Davion, Mercy, Alma, Matt, Isabella, Tamila, Aisha, Jayla, Kesha, Luis, Sarah, Destiny, Lori and Precious, my hope is that we will continue to stretch the epistemic boundaries of our music classrooms towards a more meaningful, equitable, and just *knowing* of music.

## REFERENCES

- Allsup, R. E., & Westerlund, H. (2012). Methods and situational ethics in music education. *Action, Criticism, & Theory for Music Education (MAYDAY Group)*, 11(1), 124-48. Retrieved from [http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/AllsupWesterlund11\\_1.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/AllsupWesterlund11_1.pdf)
- Asante, M. (2011). *The afrocentric idea revised*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Becker, N., & Goffi-Fynn, J. (2016). Discovering voices: Expanding students' musical and vocal ideals in an urban community children's choir. *The Choral Journal*, 56(7), 8.
- Benedict, C. (2009). Processes of alienation: Marx, Orff and Kodaly. *British Journal of Music Education*, 26(2), 213-224.
- Billboard Associated Press. Music-education CEO says minorities lack "keyboard skills," loses job. (2016, May 13). *Billboard Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.billboard.com/articles/business/7370409/michael-butera-music-education-advocacy-fired>
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Bourdieu, P., & Thompson, J. B. (Eds.). (1991). *Language and symbolic power* (Raymond, G. & Adamson, M. Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1982).
- Bradley, D. (2006). *Global song, global citizens? Multicultural choral music education and the community youth choir: Constituting the multicultural human subject* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (AATNR16043)
- Bradley, D. (2015). Hidden in plain sight. In C. Benedict, P. Schmidt, G. Spruce, & Woodford, P. (2015). *The Oxford handbook of social justice in music education* (pp. 190-203). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bucholtz, M., Casillas, D. I., & Lee, J. S. (2017). Language and culture as sustenance. In D. Paris & H.S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp. 43-59). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Calderon, D. (2011). Locating the foundations of epistemologies of ignorance in education ideology and practice. In E. Malewski & N. Jaramillo (Eds.), *Epistemologies of ignorance in education* (pp. 105-127). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc.
- Calderon, D. (2014). Uncovering settler grammars in curriculum. *Educational Studies*, 50(4), 313-338.
- Choate, R. A., Fowler, C. B., Brown, C. E., & Wersen, L. G. (1967). The Tanglewood symposium: Music in American society. *Music Educators Journal*, 54(3), 49-80.
- Clarke, B., & Parsons, J. (2013). Becoming rhizome researchers. *Reconceptualizing educational research methodology*, 4(1), 35-43.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. (B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Domínguez, M. (2017). "Se hace puentes al andar:" Decolonial teacher education as a needed bridge to culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogies. In D. Paris & H. S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp. 225-245). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2012). Cultural diversity and the formation of identity: Our role as music teachers. *Music Educators Journal*, 98(4), 53-59.
- García, M. (1847). *Traité complet de l'art du chant en deux parties*. Paris, France: Heugel.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106-116.
- Gay, G. (2011). Connections between classroom management and culturally responsive teaching. In C. M., Evertson, & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 343-370). New York, NY: Routledge.

- González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gould, E. (2012). Uprooting music education pedagogies and curricula: Becoming-musician and the Deleuzian refrain. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 33(1), 75-86.
- Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 59-68.
- Gustafson, R. I. (2009). *Race and curriculum*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Hall, K. (2014). So you want to sing voice pedagogy series. *Journal of Singing*, 70(3), 345-348.
- Hargreaves, D. J., Miell, D., & MacDonald, R. A. (2002). What are musical identities, and why are they important? In R. A. MacDonald, D. J. Hargreaves, & D. Miell (Eds.), *Musical identities* (Vol. 2, pp. 1-20). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Hess, J. (2013). *Radical musicking: Challenging dominant paradigms in elementary music education* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest LLC. (UMI 3665994)
- Hess, J. (2015). Decolonizing music education: Moving beyond tokenism. *International Journal of Music Education*, 33(3), 336-347.
- hooks, b. (2010). *Teaching critical thinking: Practical wisdom*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Joyce, V. M. (2003). *Bodies that sing: The formation of singing subjects* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (AAT NQ78458)
- Koza, J. E. (2008). Listening for whiteness: Hearing racial politics in undergraduate school music. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 16(2), 145-155.
- Kubow, P. K., & Min, M. (2016). The cultural contours of democracy: Indigenous epistemologies informing South African citizenship. *Democracy and Education*, 24(2), 5.
- Kuzmich, N. (2003). Making connections part 4: Native North Americans – when I hear the drums and singing I begin to feel good. *Canadian Music Educator*, 44(4), 9-15.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465-491.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: A.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74-84.
- Laird, S. (2009). Musical hunger: A philosophical testimonial of miseducation. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 17 (1), 4-21.
- Lee, C. D. (2017). An ecological framework for enacting culturally sustaining pedagogy. In D. Paris & H. S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp. 261-273). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Lind, V. R., & McKoy, C. L. (2016). *Culturally responsive teaching in music education: From understanding to application*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- LoVetri, J. (2013). The necessity of using functional training in the independent studio. *Journal of Singing*, 70(1), 79-86.
- Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007). On the coloniality of being: Contributions to the development of a concept. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), 240-270.
- Malloch, S. N. (2000). Mothers and infants and communicative musicality. *Musicae Scientiae*, 3(1), 29-57.
- Malloch, S., & Trevarthen, C. (2009). Musicality: Communicating the vitality and interests of life. *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship*, 1, 1-10.
- Mbembe, A. J. (2016). Decolonizing the university: New directions. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 15(1), 29-45.
- McCoy, S. (2013). Why I don't teach belting. *Journal of Singing*, 70(2), 181-182.
- Merriam, S. B., & Kim, Y. S. (2008). Non-western perspectives on learning and knowing. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2008 (119), 71-81.
- Milner IV, H. R., & Tenore, F. B. (2010). Classroom management in diverse classrooms. *Urban Education*, 45(5), 560-603.
- Miranda, D. (2013). The role of music in adolescent development: Much more than the same old song. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 18(1), 5-22.

- Monroe, C. R., & Obidah, J. E. (2004). The influence of cultural synchronization on a teacher's perceptions of disruption: A case study of an African American middle-school classroom. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(3), 256-268.
- National Association of Schools of Music. (2015). *Higher education arts data services: Music data summaries 2014-2015*.
- National Association of Teachers of Singing. website:[http://www.nats.org/cgi/page.cgi/\\_evtcal.html?evt=128](http://www.nats.org/cgi/page.cgi/_evtcal.html?evt=128)
- Olwage, G. (2004). The class and colour of tone: An essay on the social history of vocal timbre. *Ethnomusicology Forum* 13(2), 203-226.
- Palmer, P. J. (2003). Teaching with heart and soul: Reflections on spirituality in teacher education. *Journal of teacher education*, 54(5), 376-385.
- Paraskeva, J. M. (2017). Itinerant curriculum theory revisited on a non-theoricide towards the canonicide: Addressing the "curriculum involution." *Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies*, 12(1), 1-43.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97.
- Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press
- Patel, L. (2016). Reaching beyond democracy in educational policy analysis. *Educational policy*, 30(1), 114-127.
- Phinney, J. S. (1989). Stages of ethnic identity development in minority group adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 9(1-2), 34-49.
- Potter, J. (2006). *Vocal authority: Singing style and ideology*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Quantz, R. (2011). *Rituals and student identity in education: Ritual critique for a new pedagogy*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Regelski, T. A. (2004). *Teaching general music in grades 4-8: A musicianship approach*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Regelski, T. A. (2013). Re-setting music education's "default settings." *Action, Criticism, & Theory for Music Education (MAYDAY Group)*, 12(1), 7-23. Retrieved from [http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Regelski12\\_1.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Regelski12_1.pdf)

- Robinson-Martin, T. M. (2010). *Developing a pedagogy for gospel singing: Understanding the cultural aesthetics and performance components of a vocal performance in gospel music* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest LLC. (UMI No. 3424907)
- Robinson-Martin, T. (2017). *So you want to sing gospel: A guide for performers*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Rohan, T. (2011). *Teaching music, learning culture: The challenge of culturally responsive music education* (Doctoral thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10523/1865>
- Rosa, J., & Flores, N. (2017). Do you hear what I hear? Raciolinguistic ideologies and culturally sustaining pedagogies. In D. Paris & H. S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp. 175-190). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Shaw, J. T. (2014). *The music I was meant to sing: Adolescent choral students' perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest LLC. (UMI No. 3627141)
- Stark, J. (2003). *Bel canto: a history of vocal pedagogy*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Tarrant, M., North, A. C., & Hargreaves, D. J. (2002). Youth identity and music. In R. A. MacDonald, D. J. Hargreaves, & D. Miell (Eds.), *Musical identities* (Vol. 2, pp. 134-150). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Thiong'o, N. W. (2013). A globalectical imagination. *World Literature Today*, 87(3), 40-42.
- Thobani, S. (2007). *Exalted subjects: Studies in the making of race and nation in Canada*. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.
- United States Census Bureau. (2010-2014). *QuickFacts*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/00>
- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2011-12). *Number and percentage distribution of public elementary and secondary school teachers, by locale and selected characteristics: 2011-12*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/tables/c.1.a.-1.asp?refer=urban>



- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013a). *Characteristics of public and private elementary and secondary school teachers in the United States: Results from the 2011–12 schools and staffing survey*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013314.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013b). *Number and percentage distribution of public elementary and secondary students, by race/ethnicity and school urban-centric 12-category locale: Fall 2013*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/tables/B.1.b.-1.asp?refer=urban>
- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *Back to school statistics 2017*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>
- Van den Akker, J., Gravemeijer, K., McKenney, S., & Nieveen, N. (Eds.). (2006). *Educational design research*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Welch, G. F. (2005). Singing as communication. In D. Miell, R. MacDonald, & D. J. Hargreaves (Eds.), *Musical communication* (pp. 239-259). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Winnie, B. J. (2014). *Contemporary vocal technique in the choral rehearsal: Exploratory strategies for learning* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest LLC. (UMI No. 3618368)
- World Health Organization. (2016). *Maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health*. Retrieved from [http://www.who.int/maternal\\_child\\_adolescent/topics/adolescence/dev/en/#](http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/adolescence/dev/en/#)
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

## Appendix A

### Individual Student Interview Protocol

#### Research Questions

1. How do students in a diverse urban public school describe their own singing and musical background?
2. How do they describe the vocal (and music) teaching in their general music class?
3. If they could be the music teacher, how would they teach?

<b>Objectives: Concept, Research Question Themes</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
<p>1. Family/cultural musical and singing background</p> <p>RQ #1</p>	<p>What type of music does your family listen to? What type of music do you like to listen to?</p> <p>Think back to when you were a little kid. What music did you like then? Do you remember singing songs? What songs did you like back then? DO you remember anyone in your family singing songs? What do you like to sing now?</p> <p>Tell me about a musical memory you have when you were with your family? What is your mom's/dad's/grandparent's/sibling's favorite type of music to sing?</p>
<p>1. Vocal models, and preferred vocal models</p> <p>RQ #1</p>	<p>Who do you most often hear singing? Who else in your life sings around you? If you could be a famous singer, what type of music would you sing? Who is your favorite singer?</p>

<p>3. Perceptions of vocal teaching- presence of diverse singing styles</p> <p>RQ #2</p> <p>Cultural congruence/incongruence relevance</p>	<p>What is your school music class like? Tell me about the singing in your music class? What is your favorite song in school? Why?</p> <p>What does your teacher sound like when she sings? How does she want you and your classmates to sing? Can you show me?</p>
<p>4. Feelings about vocal teaching in music class</p> <p>RQs #2 &amp; #3</p> <p>Cultural congruence/incongruence Self-esteem Vocal identity Silencing/encouraging</p>	<p>How would you compare the singing in your music class to (favorite singer)?</p> <p>Which parts of your music class do you like the most?</p> <p>If you could change something about your music class, what would it be?</p> <p>How would you teach a music class?</p>
<p>5. Feelings of students about own singing- self-concept</p> <p>RQs #1 &amp; #2</p> <p>Silencing/encouraging Vocal identity</p>	<p>How would you describe your singing voice? How would you compare your singing now compared to last summer? What have you learned from your teacher about singing?</p> <p>Is there anything else you would like to share with me?</p>

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent Form

**Protocol Title:** *Adolescent Music Students' Perceptions of Singing and Vocal Education*  
**Principal Investigator:** Emily Good Perkins, Teachers College, 267-934-0660,

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Your child is being invited to participate in this research study called “Adolescent Music Students’ Perceptions of Vocal Education and Singing.” Your child may qualify to take part in this research study because he or she is an adolescent student enrolled in public school and taking a general music class. Approximately 5-10 people will participate in this study.

#### **WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE**

This study is being done to determine adolescent students’ perceptions of singing and the vocal teaching in their general music classrooms.

#### **WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

If you and your child decide to participate, your child will be interviewed by the principal investigator both individually and with a group of his or her peers. This interview will be audio-recorded. After the audio-recording is written down, the audio-recording will be deleted. If your child does not wish to be audio-recorded, he or she will be able to participate. Your child will be given a pseudonym or false name in order to keep his identity confidential.

#### **WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that your child may experience are not greater than he or she would ordinarily encounter in daily life. However, he or she does not have to answer any questions or divulge anything he or she doesn’t want to talk about. Your child can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your child’s information confidential and to prevent anyone from discovering or guessing his or her identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of his or her name and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

#### **WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There is no direct benefit to your child for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of teacher education to better understand the best way to train music teachers.

**WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

Your child will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to him or her for taking part in this study.

**WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?**

The study is over when he or she has completed the interview; however, he or she can leave the study at any time even if he or she hasn't finished.

**PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY**

The investigator will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio-recording will be written down and the audio-recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your child's real name with his or her pseudonym. Regulations require that research data be kept for at least three years.

**HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?**

The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your child's name or any identifying information about him or her will not be published.

**CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING**

Audio recording is part of this research study. You and your child can choose whether to give permission for your child to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish for him or her to be recorded, he or she will still be able to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my consent to be recorded \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ I **do not** consent to be recorded \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

**OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT**

The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
Initial Initial

I give permission to be contacted in the future for information relating to this study:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
Initial Initial

### **WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?**

**If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Emily Perkins at 267-934-0660 or at [egp2118@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:egp2118@tc.columbia.edu) or the faculty advisor, Dr. Hal Abeles at 212-678-3467**

**If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email [IRB@tc.edu](mailto:IRB@tc.edu). Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.**

### **PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS**

- I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

### **My signature means that I agree to participate in this study**

**Print name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

## Assent Form for Minors

**Protocol Title:** *Adolescent Music Students' Perceptions of Vocal Education and Singing*

**Principal Investigator:** Emily Good Perkins, Teachers College, 267-934-0660

The purpose of this study is to find out what fifth- and sixth-grade students think about singing and the teaching of singing in their school music class.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) agree to be in this study,  
titled \_\_\_\_\_.

What I am being asked to do has been explained to me by  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I understand what I am being asked to do and I know that if I have any questions, I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ at any time. I know that I can quit this study whenever I want to and it is perfectly OK to do so. It won't be a problem for anyone if I decide to quit.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Investigator's Verification of Explanation**

I certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to \_\_\_\_\_ in age-appropriate language. He/she has the opportunity to discuss it with me and knows that they can stop participating at any time. I have answered all of their questions and this minor child has provided the affirmative agreement (assent) to participate in this research study.

Investigator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_